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Radcliffe College
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Women in Politics Oral History Project

Black Women Oral History Project

Frances Mary Albrier

DETERMINED ADVOCATE FOR RACIAL EQUALITY

With Introductions by
Ruth Acty
Velma Ford

An Interview Conducted by
Malca Chall
1977 - 1978

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In behalf of future researchers this Office wishes to thank the National Endowment for the Humanities which underwrote the California Women Political Leaders Oral History Project, Radcliffe College which added Mrs. Albrier's memoir to its Black Women Oral History Project and shared some costs, the Columbia and Fairtree Foundations which provided funds to assist in the match, and the many friends of Mrs. Albrier whose contributions helped make possible the completion of the memoir. The names of the donors are listed on the following page.

Malca Chall, Project Director
Women in Politics
Oral History Project

Willa Baum, Department Head
Regional Oral History Project

2 October 1979

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PREFACE

The following interview is one of a series of tape-recorded memoirs in the California Women Political Leaders Oral History Project. The series has been designed to study the political activities of a representative group of California women who became active in politics during the years between the passage of the woman's suffrage amendment and the current feminist movement--roughly the years between 1920 and 1965. They represent a variety of views: conservative, moderate, liberal, and radical, although most of them worked within the Democratic and Republican parties. They include elected and appointed officials at national, state, and local governmental levels. For many the route to leadership was through the political party--primarily those divisions of the party reserved for women.

Regardless of the ultimate political level attained, these women have all worked in election campaigns on behalf of issues and candidates. They have raised funds, addressed envelopes, rung doorbells, watched polls, staffed offices, given speeches, planned media coverage, and when permitted, helped set policy. While they enjoyed many successes, a few also experienced defeat as candidates for public office.

Their different family and cultural backgrounds, their social attitudes, and their personalities indicate clearly that there is no typical woman political leader; their candid, first-hand observations and their insights about their experiences provide fresh source material for the social and political history of women in the past half century.

In a broader framework their memoirs provide valuable insights into the political process as a whole. The memoirists have thoughtfully discussed details of party organization and the work of the men and women who served the party. They have analysed the process of selecting party leaders and candidates, running campaigns, raising funds, and drafting party platforms, as well as the more subtle aspects of political life such as maintaining harmony and coping with fatigue, frustration, and defeat. Perceived through it all are the pleasures of friendships, struggles, and triumphs in a common cause.

The California Women Political Leaders Oral History Project has been financed by both an outright and a matching grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Matching funds were provided by the Rockefeller Foundation for the Helen Gahagan Douglas unit of the project, by Radcliffe College, by the Columbia Foundation, by the Fairtree Foundation, and by individuals who were interested in supporting memoirs of their friends and colleagues. In addition, funds from the California State Legislature-sponsored Knight-Brown Era Public Affairs Project made it possible to increase the research and broaden the scope of the interviews in which there was a meshing of the woman's political career with the topics being studied in the Knight-Brown project. Professors Judith Blake Davis,

Albert Lepawsky, and Walton Bean served as principal investigators during the period July 1975-December 1977 that the project was underway. This series is the second phase of the Women in Politics Oral History Project, the first of which dealt with the experiences of eleven women who had been leaders and rank-and-file workers in the suffrage movement.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons significant in the history of the West and the nation. The Office is under the administrative supervision of James D. Hart, Director of The Bancroft Library. Interviews were conducted by Amelia R. Fry, Miriam Stein, Gabrielle Morris, Malca Chall, Fern Ingersoll, and Ingrid Scobie.

Malca Chall, Project Director
Women in Politics Oral History Project

Willa Baum, Department Head
Regional Oral History Office

4 October 1979
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CALIFORNIA WOMEN POLITICAL LEADERS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Frances Albrier, *Determined Advocate for Racial Equality.* 1979

March Fong Eu, *High Achieving Nonconformist in Local and State Government.* 1977

Jean Wood Fuller, *Organizing Women: Careers in Volunteer Politics and Government Administration.* 1977

Elizabeth R. Gatov, *Grassroots Party Organizer to United States Treasurer.* 1977

Bernice Hubbard May, *A Native Daughter's Leadership in Public Affairs.* 1976

Hulda Hoover McLean, *A Conservative Crusader for Good Government.* 1977

Julia Porter, *Dedicated Democrat and City Planner.* 1977

Wanda Sankary, *From Sod House to State House.* 1979

Vera Schultz, *Marin County Perspective on Ideals and Realities in State and Local Government.* 1977

Clara Shirpser, *One Woman's Role in Democratic Party Politics.* 1975

Elizabeth Snyder, *California's First Woman State Party Chairman.* 1977

Eleanor Wagner, *Independent Political Coalitions: Electoral, Legislative, and Community.* 1977

Carolyn Wolfe, *Educating for Citizenship: A Career in Community Affairs and the Democratic Party, 1906-1976.* 1978

Interviews in Process

Marjorie Benedict

Odessa Cox

Pauline Davis

Ann Eliaser

Kimiko Fujii

Elinor R. Heller

Patricia R. Hitt

Lucile Hosmer

La Rue McCormick

Emily Pike

Zita Remley

Hope Mendoza Schechter

Carmen Warschaw

Rosalind Wyman

Mildred Younger

October 1979

Helen Gahagan Douglas Unit*

Interviews in Process

Helen Gahagan Douglas

Juanita Barbee

Rachel Bell

Fay Bennett

Albert Cahn

Margery Cahn

Evelyn Chavoor

Alis De Sola

Tilford Dudley

India Edwards

Walter Gahagan

Arthur Goldschmidt

Elizabeth Goldschmidt

Leo Goodman

Kenneth Harding

Charles Hogan

Chet Holifield

Mary Keyserling

Judge Byron Lindsley

Helen Lustig

Alvin Meyers

William Malone

Philip Noel-Baker

Cornelia Palms

Walter Pick

Frank Rogers

Lucy Kramer Cohen

The researcher is directed also to interviews in the Earl Warren Era Oral History Project and the Knight-Brown Era Public Affairs Project for additional material on California political history.

*The Helen Gahagan Douglas unit was designed to complete one long biographical memoir with Mrs. Douglas and short interviews with persons who had worked with her in the theatre, in her campaigns, and in Congress.

May 1978

PREFACE: BLACK WOMEN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT RADCLIFFE COLLEGE

In July 1976 the Schlesinger Library, with a two-year grant from The Rockefeller Foundation, began a project of recording the autobiographical memoirs of a group of black American women 70 years of age and older. The purpose of the project was to develop a body of resource material on the lives and contributions of black women in the twentieth century, especially in the years prior to the Civil Rights Movement, and to make this material available to researchers and students interested in the struggles of women and racial minorities in the United States. The project has focused on women who have made strong impacts on their communities through their professions or through voluntary service. Interviewees have been active in such fields as education, government, the arts, business, medicine, and law.

In the past the black woman often has not created a written record of her experiences, and when such a record has been created, it is not usually found in libraries or archives, the traditional repositories for historical documents. One means of attempting to capture and preserve such lives is the oral interview, which explores the influences and events that have shaped each woman's experience and gives her an opportunity to reflect on the past and to present her point of view on historical events. The interviews of the Black Women Oral History Project offer fresh source material that can add an important dimension to the study of the history of the United States. They supplement and comment on other sources as they examine the active participation of a group whose members were previously overlooked as being only shaped by historical events.

INTRODUCTION BY RUTH ACTY

I grew up in West Oakland during the twenties and thirties. There were very few Black people in the Bay Area at that time. (The influx came during World War II.) As far as work was concerned, there were very few job opportunities for Blacks. Most of the men worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad as waiters or as porters. (Even when their work was slightly more elevated, they were still labeled--porters.) Most of the Black women stayed at home and reared their families. Jobs as waiters or waitresses in restaurants, jobs in hotels as maids or clerks, jobs as janitors in downtown office buildings were closed to Blacks. Nor were there receptionists or nurses or teachers. However, the first nurse was hired at Highland Hospital in Oakland in the twenties and so was Oakland's first public school teacher, Miss Ida Jackson. These were among the first, but employment opportunities did not go much beyond these few.

There seemed to be an apathetic mood among most Black people about trying to break into jobs that were closed to them. There was a general feeling among the native born, and most of us were native born, that we must try our best to fit into the "establishment." Our speech and decorum were very much like those of the people who influenced us the most: our strict parents primarily, and then our staid teachers, and our friends who were for the most part White. Anyone who tried to break out of the pattern was looked upon with disfavor.

Mrs. Frances Albrier came on the scene in 1924. She was a fearless young woman from Tuskegee, Alabama who was not afraid to challenge the "establishment." She had been reared by a strong and courageous grandmother. After her grandmother passed away she came to Berkeley to live with her father.

When she later became a wife and mother, her children attended the Berkeley schools. But since their teachers were all White they felt there was no one with whom they could identify, no one at school who really understood them.

It was because of her children that Mrs. Albrier began to take stock of the community. She and her friend, Mrs. Ivah Gray, were taxpayers. They formed an organization known as the East Bay Women's Welfare Club. These women did some research and discovered that there were 5,000 Black taxpayers in Berkeley. They felt that they were taxed without being properly

represented. So, immediately they began to bring pressure to bear on the Berkeley Board of Education to appoint a Black teacher. At first the Board members were very much opposed to the idea.

Finally, Dr. Louise Hector, a pediatrician who was chairperson of the Board at that time, made an effort to persuade the others to consider the possibility of employing a Black teacher. Their response was that they did not know of any qualified Blacks in the area.

That is when I first became acquainted with Mrs. Albrier. It was the spring of 1939 and I was playing in a Federal Theater production in San Francisco, since I had not been able to find a teaching position--not even with Kindergarten-Primary, General Elementary, Junior High and Special Speech credentials from San Francisco State and six months work toward a Master's Degree at U.C. Berkeley.

The East Bay Women's Welfare Club held a meeting one afternoon in the home of one of their members and invited me to be present. Among the women who questioned me was Mrs. Albrier, an intelligent and keenly perceptive woman.

At that time there were very few Black teachers who had graduated from the University of California at Berkeley or from San Francisco State. Consequently, there were not many qualified young Black teachers available in the Bay Area. (I should add that the Board members preferred teachers who had been educated in California.)

The club women asked me to apply for a teaching position in Berkeley. They had also asked several other women.

I applied first in 1939. Dr. Dickson, the superintendent of schools, told me that there was nothing available. He suggested, however, that I keep in touch with him.

I went to El Centro in Imperial Valley to teach for three years and then returned briefly to Berkeley early in the summer of 1942. Again, I inquired of Dr. Dickson about a teaching position. Again, there was nothing available.

After accepting a position to teach Drama at Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina that Fall, I received a wire from Dr. Dickson concerning an opening. I left Bennett in December of 1942 and returned to Berkeley to accept a position to teach in Kindergarten at Longfellow School.

Later I went on to obtain an M.A. Degree at Northwestern University in Illinois and Secondary and Adult teaching credentials in California. I have long been out of Kindergarten work, but I am still teaching in Berkeley.

Today, there are a large number of minority teachers and administrators in this city and the present superintendent of the Berkeley Schools is a Black man.

Thus, one of Mrs. Albrier's dreams became a reality. Her concern and persistence has helped open doors to employment for many other people in many areas of endeavor. How does she work? She works primarily by knowing her rights under the law, by working through organizations and by being able to negotiate with people in various positions of power.

This remarkable woman has unending patience and endurance and a deep social commitment. She has the ability to follow through once she accepts a challenge. She is a firm, positive person, yet innately very kind, and her contributions to this community are legion.

Ruth Acty

10 August 1978
Berkeley, California

INTRODUCTION BY VELMA FORD

I feel privileged in having this opportunity to introduce Frances Albrier.

In retrospect, it would be appropriate to introduce this great lady in the same manner as one would Presidents, Kings, or Queens. However, many people who will read her own account of her experiences will want to know firsthand who this woman is, what is she like as a human being?

Having met Frances when I was a child and having almost constant contact with her makes it difficult to enumerate even the most cogent points of her accomplishments in a brief introduction. You will learn about her background from the oral history, so I would like to share a couple of my personal experiences with Frances.

It was at a conference some years ago when the question of the "18-year-old-vote" was on the agenda for the first time. I was disturbed because the subject was being discussed and teenagers were not permitted to have input. After sitting through the morning session I was beginning to get very weary and disgruntled, so when the microphones were placed in the audience at the front of the auditorium I ran up to the front, climbed up on the table and screamed, "Mr. Chairman, I want to be heard right now." The adults were startled, and I wanted to go home after my outburst. But Frances came to me and said, "You go back to your seat and wait there. This meeting is not over. You have done a noble thing here--you have communicated with these older people. Now they will listen." I followed her instructions. The 18-year-old vote did eventually become a reality.

Later I became very disturbed with my own role and wanted to stop working as a community leader. Frances Albrier noted the seriousness of my dilemma and came to me and said, "Your life is really not just your own. You have talents that are needed in today's world and for the future. You cannot stop now--I won't allow you to do that. You know we can't expect gratitude. We do what we have to do, then move on to the goals we have in mind."

She would not leave me until I agreed to reflect more on the stress and turmoil in the world, how different people were affected by that stress, and what the real role of a "social worker' had to be. As a result, I am still working day and night making slow progress in the areas of social change and human relations.

These two examples are typical of the profound influence she has had on the lives of her hundreds of children. She has been supportive whenever I've needed her, providing strength any orphan needs to get over those throes in life that are perhaps special to that group.

Truthfully, I would not be the person I am today if it had not been for Frances Albrier. She provided the positive role model and an ongoing relationship that has made the difference in my life. She helped me develop pride in myself, ethnic values, respect, and a healthy pattern of interaction with peers and adults. Even though father and mother were not there, I had a source of family in Frances Albrier.

When I introduce Frances now in June 1978, I always have to ask, "Would you believe that she is a couple of months away from her eightieth birthday, with the mental alertness of one thirty-five; my advisor, family, and friend as well as my chauffeur--a woman of wisdom who says something everytime she opens her mouth? Well, here she is, one of America's most articulate human beings of the century--Frances M. Albrier."

Her experiences, awards, political and social involvement, and continued participation in government and community affairs, places her in a unique class. When called upon to serve humanity, Frances never thinks twice. She always says, "Yes, I'll do it."

Whenever I am over-extended and tell Frances that I just can't get to all of the _____, she stops me cold and says, "Velma, you take the 't' off of can't."

All of us who have "touched the hem of her garment" will always serve our communities, and our world well; we will give it all that we have to offer in positive ways to help make this world a better place for our most valued resource, Our Children. I speak for all of "her children." We love Frances Albrier and we know you will, too, as we share her with you through her own "Oral History."

Velma Ford

7 June 1978
Berkeley, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Frances Albrier, a resident of Berkeley, California since 1920, is an indefatigable opponent of racial prejudice, a strong-willed, yet gentle leader on behalf of equal rights for Negroes. Born in 1898, educated at Tuskegee Institute, which her grandmother, a former slave, helped found, and at Howard University, she has always felt keenly an obligation to promote equality. Never forgetting her grandmother's admonition that "bitterness could kill you," she learned to substitute for bitterness and rancor, carefully planned political strategems, matched by a stubborn determination to meet her goals.

Thus she has been at the forefront of every major civil rights movement since the early twenties, often setting up ad hoc organizations in order to achieve specific local goals. Along the way she has inspired many young men and women to carry forward in the same spirit and to the same ends. She has helped pave the way for black women and men to work as clerks in neighborhood stores, to work as welders in the shipyards during World War II, to teach in public schools, to train as nurses, to run for and be elected to the city council, the school board, and the state legislature. Oftimes during these years Frances Albrier has not only been the first black person to join an organization, she has been the first woman.

Little wonder then that Frances Albrier is today a highly respected leader among people of all races, or that she was chosen to participate in the California Women Political Leaders Oral History Project after a special matching offer from the National Endowment for the Humanities enabled the Regional Oral History Office to extend the project to include four women from minority ethnic communities who have had significant impact on their own as well as the broader majority community.

Matching funds for the Albrier memoir came from several sources. The first was through a successful local fund drive planned and carried out by three of Mrs. Albrier's friends. The second came from Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America at Radcliffe College whose directors agreed to include Mrs. Albrier's memoir in their national Black Women Oral History Project and to share some of the costs. That project has been funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. Finally added funds came from the Columbia Foundation and the Fairtree Foundation.

Although Mrs. Albrier has been interviewed innumerable times, mainly by the press, she understood that working on a full-length biographical memoir would require more time and effort on her part than had any of the other interviews. How much extra time and effort I am sure she did not realize at first, any more than I realized the extent of her incredibly broad community involvement until after I had met with her to plan the interview sessions and later received a box full of letters, press clippings, membership certificates, and other carefully saved memorabilia.

That Mrs. Albrier would provide a candid, down-to-earth interview was apparent during our first meeting, when replying to my question about which term she would prefer me to use in talking to her, Negro or black, she answered that it really didn't matter because when she started out in life the word in vogue was "colored." And if there was any concern on her part in being interviewed by a Caucasian she never let me feel it. She answered all my questions frankly, quietly teaching me much about the struggle for racial equality in Berkeley and the United States which can be understood best only by those who have experienced it.

One of the major "finds" in Mrs. Albrier's box of memorabilia was a large scrapbook with twenty pages full of carefully pasted-down material on her activities in the community and in politics dating from 1938 to 1971, with loose papers in envelopes bringing her activities up to the present. As I read through this, taking notes in order to prepare outlines for the interview sessions, it became obvious that despite Mrs. Albrier's individual approaches to ending racism, she, like other community and political leaders, was not acting in isolation, that she was always a part of the nation's civil rights movement. To find out more about this history, I sought advice from William M. Banks, Professor of Afro-American Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Professor Banks offered many helpful ideas for questions and suggested that I read Negro Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century, edited by Francis L. Broderick and August Meier. I also found helpful Gerda Lerner's Black Women in White America, and of significant local interest, The Negro Trail Blazers in California, written by Oakland Tribune columnist, Delilah Beasley, and published privately in 1919.

Mrs. Albrier and I began the first of our nine taping sessions on November 14, 1977 and we continued at almost weekly intervals until March 2, 1978. We always met from two until four o'clock in the afternoon so that Mrs. Albrier could carry out her duties in the Senior Citizens Center, or attend other community meetings in the mornings. We sat in her warm, glassed-in front porch during the first two meetings, enjoying the late afternoon sun. But when California's two-year drought gave way to heavy rains during the winter and spring of 1978 we sought warmth and shelter in the living room. Here by the window, Mrs. Albrier set up a card table and chair for my use. She sat comfortably in an arm chair nearby, and in this manner we completed the remaining seven sessions.

Mrs. Albrier has lived in her home at 1621 Oregon Street since 1922, in one of Berkeley's older, one-time integrated, and now primarily black neighborhoods. It is a spacious two-story house, comfortably furnished in the never out-of-date Victorian style. In this home Mrs. Albrier reared her three children; this home also has been the pivotal center of countless community meetings.

From March 14 to August 22, 1978 Mrs. Albrier carefully reviewed her edited transcript, patiently adding more detail, correcting spelling, and filling in sections which could not be heard because of occasional static on

the tape. The table of contents, the brief biography, and the introductions offer a key to the many topics covered in this oral history.

Mrs. Albrier has deposited her scrapbook and other papers in The Bancroft Library; some of the material has been duplicated and placed where relevant in the manuscript in order to give the reader an idea of the richness of the collection. Not only does it give insights into Mrs. Albrier's life and activities, it also provides an overview of the forty-year history of the local Negro community: the press, the leaders, the social, civic and political affairs.

Many persons have cooperated to make this memoir possible: Ruth Acty, and Velma Ford who wrote introductions, and who, along with Maryetta Gross, co-chaired the campaign for funds; the donors; Ruth Hill, the director of the Black Women Oral History Project, and Patricia King, director of Schlesinger Library. This volume has been worth the efforts of all concerned as it details the life of one woman who never gave up her struggle for equality, a life which can provide inspiration to those who want to know how difficult goals, once set, can be achieved.

Malca Chall
Interviewer-Editor

26 July 1979
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

Albrier: No, I didn't know him too well. He came back and forth to see us all the time. He kept in touch. He took care of my grandmother because she was rearing my sister and me.

Chall: He provided the financial support?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Did he ever remarry?

Albrier: About ten years later, he remarried.

Chall: How long had your parents been married before your mother died?

Albrier: I really don't know just how long they had been married.

My mother was employed. She was quite a chef-cook in her own right. I don't know the people's name that she cooked for; they were very wealthy. She did all of the catering for their company. They were the ones who got in touch with a doctor who lived in Mt. Vernon. In the meantime, my mother had friends in Mt. Vernon and she went there to get cared for by this doctor.

Chall: She really went for medical reasons.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Did she plan to go back and live in the South, do you think?

Albrier: Yes, she planned to go back and live in the South because her employers--this lady and she were good friends, and she depended on her to do so many things for her.

Chall: You were born in Mt. Vernon. Was your sister, Laura, born in Mt. Vernon, too?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: That means your mother stayed there for about four years, or did she return between those two births?

Albrier: She didn't stay. After I was born, she went back.

Chall: I see--so she really just went to Mt. Vernon for--

Albrier: She was just visiting. She went to Mr. Vernon just for the doctor.

Chall: Did your father go with her to Mt. Vernon?

Albrier: I think he did.

Chall: What did your father do? What was his business in Georgia?

Albrier: My father worked for different trades. He learned a great deal about making chairs, especially cane chairs. He worked in a large factory as a supervisor in the chair department until he came West. He was also an excellent cook. He went to school in Tuskegee and he took up cooking.

Chall: Did your mother go to school in Tuskegee, too? Had she had an education like your father?

Albrier: I don't know. My mother didn't go to school in Tuskegee, but it was one of her ambitions that I should attend Tuskegee. She requested that of my grandmother. That was one of the reasons she gave me to my grandmother.

Chall: She must have really trusted her mother-in-law.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: What did your father do when he came West? And how far West is West?

Albrier: My father came with eight friends--they came to Pasadena.

Chall: That's West! [Laughter]

Albrier: In California, my father worked in different jobs. I don't know just what he did. Some of the jobs involved cooking. He lived in Pasadena about ten years before he came up to northern California.

Chall: As far north as Oakland?

Albrier: Berkeley. His first job in Berkeley was with a fraternity. He took charge of the fraternity and he was their cook and supervisor. He ran the house for these young men. I don't know which fraternity that was.

Chall: He really had a marketable skill, didn't he?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: He wasn't unemployed very long, I would imagine.

Albrier: My grandmother always taught us we should learn to sew, which I never did. She used to say you should learn to sew because people always have to wear clothes, and learn to cook because they will always have to eat and they will eat.

Her Grandmother, Johanna Bowen Redgrey

Chall: She was right. What was your grandmother's name?

Albrier: Johanna Bowen.

Chall: Redgrey? She didn't have the name Redgrey--your father's name?

Albrier: There's a lot of history about my grandfather's name. My father had his name changed from Bowen because he said that wasn't his name. His name was Redgrey.

Chall: So your grandmother then took on the name Redgrey, eventually?

Albrier: They called her Redgrey, but always she was known as Mrs. Bowen. My grandfather passed and she kept on under the name of Bowen.

Chall: Were your grandmother or your grandfather ever slaves in the South?

Albrier: My grandmother was a slave; my grandfather wasn't. My grandfather was a Blackfoot Indian, who rambled, and traveled in the South. His home was in Wyoming--in the Dakotas--that's where the Blackfoots lived.

Chall: And he met your grandmother in the South when he was traveling there? Did he meet your grandmother after she had been a slave --at the end of slavery?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: I see--when she was more or less free?

Albrier: Yes.

Memories of Slavery

Chall: Did your grandmother ever tell you any stories about that part of her life?

Albrier: She said she was eighteen years old when Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves. But she was not born and reared in Alabama. She was born in Virginia--I think near Richmond, Virginia--and she lived there. Her master had a large large plantation. He owned many, many slaves. I don't know how many. Her master there was her father.

Chall: And she knew it?

Albrier: My grandmother was six foot. She had Irish, fair skin and red hair, and grey eyes. She was a very Irish type and quite strong. She used to say that her joints were doubled. Her master and her father went broke just before the war and he had to sell a lot of them. She said he hated to do that but he couldn't get around it. She didn't know what financial trouble he had gotten into. He sold her and two brothers to Bowen in Alabama.

Chall: That's the Bowen.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Slaves took the names of their masters, so she just assumed the name of her master at the time.

Albrier: That's right.

Chall: What about her mother? Was her mother in the same household with her in Richmond?

Albrier: My grandmother never discussed her mother, so I don't know whether she lived or not, or what happened to her.

Chall: Because she was so fair skinned and white, I suppose she was practically passing for white--if her hair was red and her eyes were grey. Did that mean anything to her, do you think, or to her father at the time that he sold her?

Albrier: When she was sold and went to Alabama--that wasn't Tuskegee. I don't know just where it was in Alabama. She talked about Montgomery a lot, but they were near Montgomery. She said that when she was sold, her master put all of them out in the field.

Albrier: It was the time they were chopping cotton, so that must have been the springtime. Her master told Bowen that . . . . She sold for a large sum of money, something like $800. Bowen was told, "Don't bother her" because she had a temper and if he made her angry, "she'd kill you." But, "she could do the work of three people. She was strong and healthy--and she would. But don't bother her--"

Chall: The Irish temper. [Laughs]

Albrier: Bowen put her out in the field, chopping cotton when she got there, after a couple of days. All of them. It seems to me he had a lot of cotton and it had to be taken care of. Their fields were weedy and grassy. Chopping the cotton is taking the weeds and grass from around the cotton so it can grow. He told the overseer not to bother Johanna, because Johanna will do the work of two men; don't bother her because she has a temper and she'll kill you. That meant she wasn't afraid of you.

She said that the overseer came along and she was a row and a half ahead of all the others--the men and all of them. She was that far ahead of them in chopping the cotton. He was on the horse, took the whip and hit her. He said, "You can be further along chopping this cotton." She said, "You see I'm a row and a half ahead of all the rest." But he said, "You could be two rows ahead of all the rest." She said, "Well, if I'm not, you'd better not hit me anymore." So he rode off. In about three or four hours, he came back and he hit her again. She became so angry--she meant to take the handle of the hoe and hit him--knock him off the horse. She must have taken the hoe--she knocked him off the horse. She didn't know what happened--she didn't know whether she killed him or what happened to him.

All the slaves were excited and ran to the house and got Master Bowen. Bowen asked her what happened. He said, "I told him not to bother with you." He saw how far ahead she was, and he said to take him to the house. She never could find out what happened to that man. She never knew whether she killed him or not. Nobody would say anything.

She thought she was going to get a good beating because the slaves would get whipped for doing something. She stayed awake three months because they would do it at midnight when the people were asleep. But he didn't. They would take the slaves out at night and beat them for doing things they shouldn't do. They must have done that in Virginia where she lived. She didn't know this Bowen very well. But nothing happened and she never knew what became of that man. But she felt it was his fault. She

Albrier: knew she was a slave and knew she had to do her work, but she would die before she'd let them mistreat her. So she wouldn't let them mistreat her.

Chall: Her father understood this. He wasn't fooling when he told people she had a temper. She had a temper and must have showed it to her first master.

Albrier: He had given her next owner in Alabama--he told him that she had a temper but could do the work of two other people--I mean three people. And she did her work, but, "don't bother her."

Chall: At first, I thought he was saying that to protect her because she was his daughter.

Albrier: He knew she had a temper. Evidently she had shown it. She was trustworthy. Another thing my grandmother said afterwards was that she was sold for $830. She had a brother who was sold for $600. She said it was a case of money. My grandmother didn't know economics, but I know from the way she talked that she understood it was a case of economics.

Here was the overseer who was just a poor white man, who was mistreating her. But she had cost her owner eight hundred and some odd dollars. She was more valuable to him than the overseer. She always said money is evil and money will cause a lot of things to happen with people, and it changes peoples' lives and their ideas. Here she was a good slave who worked hard and had a responsible position. And her own father sold her.

Chall: It's hard to explain any of that.

Albrier: Yes. Later, when she was--I think--eighteen or maybe a little older than that--Abraham Lincoln came on the scene. There was a lot of talk. Sherman came marching through the South. Her brothers left to go to war--to fight against slavery. She never saw her two brothers again and thinks they were killed, because they would have come back. She never knew what happened. Some men came back to the South, but some didn't. She was sure they would have come back to see her.

She said that Bowen called them one day and told them he wanted to meet and talk with them. He said, "Someday, we don't know how soon or how late it will be, but someday you're going to be as free as I am because Abraham Lincoln is going to free the slaves. I want you to stay and work for me and take care of the farm and I'll pay you--those of you who want to stay. I would appreciate your staying. Those who don't want to stay can

Albrier: go. But I'm telling you now what's going to happen. I'm going to have to go away on business."

Before he went away, he told my grandmother, "I want you to take charge of the house and my wife--she's sick--and the kids." He told his wife to let Johanna take charge of everything and don't worry, because "I don't want her killing you. Don't make her angry; just let her take charge and she'll do everything. You try to get well because I have to go away." And she did. There was a boy and a girl and she reared these children.

Chall: Does that mean she stayed on the farm after slavery was abolished?

Albrier: That's right. She stayed.

Chall: And she was paid?

Albrier: His wife died before the Emancipation. Later she moved and came up to Tuskegee.

Chall: After she was married or before?

Albrier: After she was married.

Her Grandfather, Lewis L. Redgrey

Chall: Then she met your grandfather while she was working for Bowen.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: In the house.

Albrier: Yes. That's where the confusion of names--My grandfather was Indian. He had his own name and it was two colors. The Indians, when a child is born or right after it's born--the first thing that the mother sees, they name the child. That's why one may be named Gray Mare, because she sees a gray mare. It might be named Robin 'cause she sees a robin.

Chall: That becomes the name.

Albrier: That becomes the name of the child.

Chall: Does that become their surname?

Albrier: Their given name.

Chall: So your grandfather's name was--

Albrier: Redgrey.

Chall: His first name was Red--

Albrier: --and Grey.

Chall: Are they two names?

Albrier: Redgrey--one name. Some people confuse it with Gregory and Redgraves. My father took his name. He wouldn't take any of the other names either. A great many black people changed their names because they did not want to keep the names of their masters. Some remembered their African names.

Chall: So your father then took the Redgrey name of his father. Your grandmother was known as Johanna Redgrey, legally?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Were there any laws which said that blacks couldn't marry Indians? Or was it just that blacks couldn't marry whites in the South?

Albrier: No, at that time, many Indians took black slaves to their villages and married them. It was intermarriage with the Indians.

Chall: They took them in purposely to help them be away from their slave situation? They really helped free them?

Albrier: Yes. There was quite a bit of that after the Emancipation.

Chall: What did your grandfather do in Tuskegee? Was he just traveling through?

Albrier: He farmed.

Chall: He had his own farm?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: So your mother then moved with him, after she was married--onto the farm?

Albrier: My grandmother.

Chall: Your grandmother, excuse me.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: That was in where--Tuskegee?

Albrier: My grandmother, yes.

Chall: How big was that farm, do you know?

Albrier: It was about fifty-five acres, more or less. Quite a large farm--a fertile farm.

[Intermittent static on tape from this point on.]

Albrier: The majority of farmers raised cotton and all the farmers raised their food--their hogs and corn for the family and for the animals. Cotton was king for many many years.

Chall: Did your grandfather sharecrop the farm?

Albrier: No, he owned it.

Chall: How had he acquired it--the money to own his own farm?

Albrier: I don't know where he acquired the money. My grandfather was stolen from his tribe by some Spanish people. They took him to Mexico. He lived with them for a good many years before he wandered back up the States from Mexico. He could speak Spanish quite well. He was quite a horseman.

Chall: Your grandfather was quite an independent sort of individual and your grandmother was independent--that must have been quite a household. Nobody was going to bother them much. How many children did they have in addition to your own father?

Albrier: They had another son.

Chall: It was a small family. Do you think that was by choice? Do you have any idea?

Albrier: No, it just happened that way.

Chall: Another brother. What was the brother's name? Your father's brother.

Albrier: Singleton. He died quite young.

Chall: You never knew him then.

Albrier: No.

Recollections of Life with Her Exceptional Grandmother

Chall: How old do you think your grandmother was when you came to live with her? She probably always seemed old to you, but she probably wasn't old. Do you have any idea how old she was?

Albrier: I imagine my grandmother must have been about fifty.

Chall: How old was your mother when she died?

Albrier: I really don't know how old my mother was when she died. My mother was quite young. I think she was twenty-five.

Chall: Did your grandmother remarry after your grandfather died?

Albrier: No.

Chall: I take it the rest of her life was devoted to rearing you and your sister.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: That was in Tuskegee. Tell me how she did it. What kind of person was she as you knew her, as you were growing up?

Albrier: My grandmother had gone to school and she worked with doctors. She was a midwife and an expert baby nurse. She met many wonderful people who loved her and she thought a great deal of them, in her lifetime.

Chall: When you knew her, was she still living on the family farm?

Albrier: Yes. She lived in Tuskegee and was there when Booker T. Washington came. She knew Mr. Adams and the men who sent to Hampton [Institute] to get somebody to come and start a school. She was with the group that said we need a school for our children here because the schools are too far away. Everybody agreed they needed somebody to start a school and would help support the school. So Mr. Adams sent to Hampton to send somebody to start a school for them.

Chall: This would have been a school for the black children.

Albrier: Yes. They sent Booker T. Washington. My grandmother was one of the persons who greeted him--

Chall: When he came to Tuskegee. Was it planned that this would be an elementary school, or what kind of school were they thinking about then?

Albrier: It was to be an elementary school and work according to the needs. All they wanted was a school to teach the children.

Chall: I don't know much about Tuskegee.

Albrier: The school had to be organized by the teacher that was coming.

Chall: Who was Mr. Adams? Was he a white man in the community? Or was this all in the black community?

Albrier: He was one of the community, the black community.

Chall: Was this a large black community in Tuskegee?

Albrier: Quite large. The first term of the school was taught in my grandmother's church, the A.M.E. Zion Church over on Zion Hill.

Chall: This was before your arrival, though?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: This had already been set up by the time you arrived?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Had your father gone to this school?

Albrier: My father went to the school, yes. He was a youngster at that time.

Chall: So your grandmother must have helped set that up when she had just barely arrived in Tuskegee, it sounds like.

Albrier: Yes. She had two friends she had adopted as her sisters. One of these young women was one of the first persons who graduated from the school.

Chall: She took them on when they were young, then, to give them an education. She had a strong feeling, then, for education.

Albrier: Yes. She had that strong feeling about education and that's why she had that feeling about me, that I should go to that school. And my mother had that same type of feeling.

Chall: Apparently your father agreed and so there was no problem about turning you over to his own mother.

Religion

Chall: Was there a strong religious activity in the family? Did your grandmother rear your sister and you in the A.M.E. Zion church?

Albrier: Yes. My grandmother was quite religious and we came up with this church. It was two churches: Baptist and Methodist. Both were on a hill. One was on one hill; the other was on the other hill. One we called Baptist Hill and the other was Methodist Hill. One group would turn out church one Sunday and worship with the other one.

Chall: Did they each have a minister?

Albrier: Each had a minister. The Baptists proposed the Baptist faith, that is, the way they baptize; the Methodists proposed the Methodist faith. But they were friends and they worked together.

Both of those churches were very close to Booker T. Washington and the school, doing whatever they could for that school to promote education for the young black kids in that vicinity--and other places, because the school came to be quite famous and students came from other states.

Chall: Even as young elementary students? Or high school? Or was it college when they came to school?

Albrier: Elementary students.

Chall: So that means the children had to be boarded somewhere as little children?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: I see. Away from their parents.

Albrier: They weren't little children; they were young men and women.

Chall: High school age, then.

Albrier: Yes. Some of them were more than that. A lady graduated when I graduated from school, who was fifty years old. She said if it

Albrier: was the last thing she did, she wanted to get an education. There were thousands of young black men and women without any education--couldn't read and write.

Tuskegee Institute and Booker T. Washingon

Chall: Who supported Booker T. Washington and the few teachers that he had? Did the community support them?

Albrier: There was an endowment given by the state to him--and the county and the community.

Chall: So it was a tax-supported school.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: That was the separate but equal school?

Albrier: Yes. Remember, he said one of the greatest gifts he had was a dozen eggs. That was from an old lady who brought him a dozen eggs and said, "Mr. Washington, I only have this dozen eggs but you take them and use them, because I want to see these boys and girls get an education."

Chall: Was he a relatively young man when he came to Tuskegee?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: He stayed there until he died, didn't he?

Albrier: Yes. He built the school into a great institution.

Chall: Yes, he did. Do you remember him?

Albrier: Yes. He died in 1915. That was the year I came West.

Chall: So then you went through school knowing him as one of the teachers and founders. Was he a hero to the community and to the children? Did you feel that?

Albrier: He was a hero all over the United States. Educational hero. I didn't feel it at the time. I didn't know he was a famous man--he was just Mr. Washington to us kids. Just a person that we knew, who headed the school. We didn't realize that he was going to be so famous. The same way with Professor Carver. I never

Albrier: realized I was going to school to a distinguished scientist. He was just another teacher who taught me botany.

Chall: Booker T. Washington--did he teach or did he mostly administer the school?

Albrier: Mr. Washington administered the school. He didn't have time to teach. He traveled, and lectured, and raised money for the school. He had many problems and he was starting different things, especially agriculture. He kept, as long as he lived, a large night school. Boys and girls came to Tuskegee--I'd see them come to Tuskegee--with just a little knapsack and ten dollars. Ten dollars was the entrance fee. That's all they had. But they wanted to get an education. They felt it was needed. Those students came to Tuskegee to work their way through school.

There were three or four hundred students at the night school all the time. They would work on the farm during the day to raise vegetables for the day school students--and in the chicken department, the dairy department, and all over. They would go to school just three hours at night, and it took them two years to make one grade. But they stayed. Many of them finished school and got a trade.

Chall: When you say they raised the vegetables and food for the school, does that mean that it was a boarding school for many people?

Albrier: Yes, it was a boarding school, except for those who lived in Tuskegee, within five or six miles, who lived at home. Some students lived at home and went to school, but the rest of it was a boarding school. He never turned away any students who said they wanted to go to school.

Chall: So many of them just worked--

Albrier: That's why he traveled all over the United States and raised money to build Tuskegee. It became larger and larger. They added to the curriculum and added trade after trade. He said they had to learn because slaves like him--he went to school and worked--were turned out without knowing anything. They only knew how to raise cotton. There were many students who came and took up different trades. Today they still take up those different trades--farmers, shoemakers, cooks, carpenters--all of those types of trade that they came to learn.

Chall: Your father learned how to cane chairs as well as cook, so your father had two trades.

Albrier: I mentioned he learned more about the cooking there than he did the cane chairs. He learned that in a factory.

Chall: He was turned out of school as a cook, then?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: When did you start to school? At the elementary level? You started the first grade at Tuskegee?

Albrier: I started first grade at Children's House.

Chall: What was that?

Albrier: That was a grammar school where the teachers' children lived, and the children of other people in the community went to this school. It was called Children's House.

Chall: How did you get there? Did you walk to school?

Albrier: I walked to school. All of the kids walked to school. I walked to school unless I wanted a ride. If I'd ride, I'd ride on my pony.

Chall: [Chuckles] You were living on your grandmother's farm?

The Importance of an Education

Chall: What do you remember of your elementary school years? Anything special that you liked, and teachers that you especially liked?

Albrier: You mean certain teachers?

Chall: Yes. Was there something about school that you either liked or disliked [chuckles] when you started out? Because you really have gone a long way on your education, I thought maybe you could tell me something that you can remember about the school. Did you like school when you first started out as a little girl?

ALbrier: I always liked school; always had a lot of fun in school. My grandmother instilled in me the value of going to school and getting an education.

[end tape 1, side 1; begin tape 1, side 2]

Chall: You were saying you knew how important an education was. It was instilled in you; so you liked school.

Albrier: I could see so many students coming to school to get an education, so I knew it must be something one needed very badly or there wouldn't be so many students coming far and near, who were working long hours during the day and going to school at night. So, to get an education meant it was something valuable and needed. Besides, my grandmother said that one must have an education to have a good life and to become something worthwhile in life. To do things for others in life, one must have an education. We were quite fortunate because so many of the black people in slavery were denied education. All the teachers told us that we owed something to the race--we owed something to other black people. The only way we could help bring them up from where they had come from was through education.

Chall: So you had that instilled in you from the time you were very young?

Albrier: Yes.

Prejudice and the Teachings Against Bitterness

Chall: If Tuskegee was primarily a black community, was there much interrelationship with whites?

Albrier: No. No. There was a lot of prejudice. Only in employment. The blacks lived over on their side of the city and the whites lived on the other. It's quite remarkable, now that I look back, because Tuskegee has a black mayor now. Before, that was unthinkable. A white person would think he was downgrading himself if he voted for a black mayor, but that's how times have changed and I'm glad that I have lived to see that time change.

Chall: Was there any communication at all in your family, then, with the white community? Did your grandmother act as midwife and nurse to white families?

Albrier: My grandmother had many white friends. Yes, she acted as midwife and nurse to many white families. She would attend to them--give them medicines. Her teas and brews--she was quite an herbalist. She would save, and she knew all the herbs. For miles around, my grandmother was the only person who could cure a rattlesnake bite if she got to them in time. If I had known like

Albrier: I know now, I could have been quite an herbalist and known the different herbs that she used.

She always said that beside a poison weed is an antidote. Nature always provided it. For instance poison oak--a great many kids would come to her, and their parents would send them to her for what to do about a bad case of poison oak. She would go out in the woods and get a certain weed--I called it a weed--and brew it, make a tea, and bathe them with it, and have them drink some of it, and cure that poison oak.

Chall: Do you think she learned that as part of the lore when she was on the farm as a slave?

Albrier: Yes. And with other slaves and other people.

Chall: They had to take care of themselves.

Albrier: They had to take care of themselves.

Chall: So it was just part of their own culture.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: What was the feeling toward the white community? On the one hand, you were isolated and separated and given a feeling that you must help bring up the race. On the other hand, you recognized isolation and prejudice. How did you all react to that?

Did it make you bitter and prejudiced yourselves, dealing with the prejudice of others?

Albrier: It was according to the environment and the people you were around. I never became bitter because my grandmother wouldn't let me. I remember reading Uncle Tom's Cabin and I became so angry about the way Uncle Tom was treated. I said to my grandmother I could kill all the white people and throw them in the river. She started with me then and said, "No you can't; you must not be bitter because that will kill you. Bitterness will kill you. You must trust in God and ask for God's love, just like Uncle Tom did, and that is the thing that's going to save the world; not bitterness, and envy, and fighting." She kept telling me that and drilling that in me, that I came up without the bitterness that a great many blacks had in the South.

Chall: Understandably they would have it.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Well, she was a remarkable person when you come to think of what she accomplished, not only in her own life but what she accomplished in rearing you and, I presume, your sister.

Albrier: She became very religious and said she received the power from God through prayer. In the wee hours of the morning out in the woods, she would pray. They would go out and pray in slavery days and they had to be very quiet because if they were caught having church and praying, they would be whipped.

Chall: I didn't know that.

Albrier: That's right.

Chall: And yet they had been taught the Christian religion over the years as they came through slavery. Certainly, somebody had been a missionary out in the fields.

Albrier: They were taught a certain amount. They were allowed to go to church, but the minister always had certain chapters to read. "Slaves, obey your master," and things like that. They were taught that. They were taught that there was going to be some evolution or something in the minds of people--God was going to direct it--that there would be no more slavery. When Abraham Lincoln came on the scene, they knew, and said that was the answer to prayers; not only their prayers; but a great many good white people. My grandmother had white friends who did not believe in slavery. They were abolitionists.

Chall: Her release, if she felt any pressures, came I suppose from prayer.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: And her church was the Methodist.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Did your sister grow up with the same attitudes towards life as you have?

Albrier: Yes, practically.

Chall: That's a strong grandmother.

Albrier: [Chuckles] I think my sister's more religious than I am.

Chall: You went into the community in a different way from the path of your grandmother. You could direct some of your energies to

Chall: changing the social world around you by getting into it, whereas your grandmother really couldn't, could she?

Albrier: No. My grandmother always believed that you had to fight and earn what you got. She often talked about earning respect from people; that you couldn't be disrespectful; you couldn't have a mean disposition and have people like you. That you had to earn the respect and earn their love and their likeness. Even if they disrespected you, you return respect because it will come back to you. In her simple way, those were her instructions and her teachings for all the kids. She used to teach Sunday school. [Chuckles]

Chall: [Laughs] So the message went beyond the two of you?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: What about her temper as you knew her? Did she have that under control, or did you ever see her lose her temper?

Albrier: It was under control. I never saw her with a temper.

Chall: It was her way of defending herself as a slave.

Albrier: Yes, but she always told us that we had to defend ourselves and we had to fight for anything worthwhile, to earn it.

Chall: But not with your fists.

Albrier: Not with our fists. She said with education, with prayer, with goodness and respect for people--and love for people--which I didn't all the time. [Laughter]

Chall: It's a hard way to live, isn't it? You can try.

Albrier: My grandmother loved her master, and I never would have. She always found excuses.

Chall: Is that Mr. Bowen?

Albrier: Yes. And she found excuses for her father for selling them. She said he just couldn't help it. He had so much pressure.

Chall: She accepted her role as a slave as best she could. It was just her way of life and she accepted it.

Albrier: Yes, and she said God had blessed her to be born strong and brave so she could fight back, and that she had the strength to work and

Albrier: do what they asked her to do. And that was work. She could turn out so much work. She said that was a gift from God. But all the slaves didn't have that gift, so she had to do more.

Chall: She was in a sense always helping her fellows, one way or another.

Albrier: Yes, she was.

Chall: Quite a remarkable person, I would say. Besides church, what else did she do in the community? Was that her prime work, and her job as a midwife?

Albrier: There were many activities in Tuskegee in the school. She took a great deal of time and gave a great deal of work to the Mothers Club. They didn't have PTAs then; they had Mothers Clubs, I imagine. She worked diligently in the Mothers Club with Mrs. Washington and other teachers.

Chall: What do you think she was trying to do in the club?

Albrier: The club would raise money; have pie and cake sales, and raise money for students who weren't able to go to school or to pay for uniforms or books. They had many students like that they tried to take care of through this Mothers Club. The Mothers Club extended all over the United States. My grandmother knew people who left Tuskegee--white people. They went North and to Chicago. They would gather up clothing and send it back to the Mothers Club for needy students--and that type of thing. All students that came, benefitted. There weren't too many students who were able to pay their way through school. By the way, I have to think how far advanced our money has come. At that time, ten dollars was a lot of money. It's worth a hundred now. Ten dollars was tuition and ten dollars a month room and board.

Chall: Even then, for the average black person, it was probably hard to come by--that ten dollars.

Albrier: Yes. That's why those students would get there with just that first ten dollars tuition.

Chall: Just come in.

Albrier: Just come in.

Chall: For a whole year?

The Purpose of the Tuskegee Academic-Vocational Program

Albrier: Just paid their ten dollars tuition for a whole year. They didn't have anything else--no more money. Those were the ones who worked their way through school. They were so enthused about getting an education and learning a trade. Those were the ones who learned to be the carpenters, farmers, dressmakers. It was a school that is really needed today.

Chall: Vocational training.

Albrier: Vocational training. Because we went to school three days a week--they had academic studies three days a week. I was so young and those boys and girls were much older. I was just a kid and played my way through school. I would say, "I believe I want to be a dressmaker." I'd go into dressmaking class and baste, and that's as far as I'd get. Then I'd get tired and restless. The teachers would let me go because they knew I was going to advance more. My grandmother was going to send me away to school if I finished Tuskegee. There were quite a few young students like that going to school. We were really out of place because some of the students were grown men and women who were coming there to school.

Chall: The school was set up so that anybody, at whatever level he was, came into a classroom regardless of his age and had the same three days?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: You only went to school three days and the other two were spent on--

Albrier: --your trade; your vocation. Everything was geared to that vocation. I remember I asked why I had to learn how many shingles it takes to go on a trapezoid roof. Arithmetic and questions were geared along trade. The boys would say, "Why do I have to learn how many cubic inches in a cake pan?" If he was going to be a baker, he had to learn. They'd complain, "I'm not going to be a baker; I'm going to be a tailor," or, "I'm going to be a farmer; I'm going to be a chicken rancher, or, I'm going to be a dairyman."

Chall: The other days were what--reading and writing and history--the academic days?

Albrier: The academic days, yes. The other days, including Saturday, they worked on different trades. They were out learning. Every year at graduation time, that was one of the displays at Tuskegee for

Albrier: the visitors--a great big stage and on the stage were all of these trades. When the whistle blew, they'd begin to shoe a horse. One machine was going. There was cooking going--to show how it was done. Hundreds of students learned and were sent out well equipped.

Now today, I'm on the CETA [Comprehensive Employment Training Act] board. It came up with the commissioners one night about a shoe repair shop. They didn't think it should be that much money--that it would be well spent. I said to them that I know just about every large city in the United States has a shoe repair shop owned and run by a Tuskegeean who learned that trade in Tuskegee, Alabama. People always are going to wear shoes and have to have shoes repaired. They're going to have to have heels lowered, heels made higher. They need a good repair man and a man who knows about shoes.

Chall: That's interesting. You've been attached to the alumni association for many years from Tuskegee, so I assume you know how good that training has been. Those people always managed to have employment then, once they went out?

Albrier: Yes. We had a doctor--a young man who hand't finished his training and had to get out of school at Meharry because he had no money. But he had gone to Tuskegee and learned to be a skilled shoe repairman. So he just went to work in Chicago and finally he had his own shop, and finally he built three shops of shoe repairing, and taught other young people. Then he went on back to medical school.

But that was Booker T. Washington's idea. We would say to him, "Why don't we have enough mathematics in the school? Why are we lower in our mathematics problems? Why don't we have more chemistry in the school? Why do we have to graduate and go to other schools to pick up those subjects?" He would say, "This school, while I live, is not for professionals; high learning. This school will teach you a trade and help you to go to the higher learning schools--get a higher education, because you will have a skilled trade to earn it with."

That's what the black boys and girls needed because none of them were backed with money to go to school, or parents who had the money to give them the education that they wanted. But when they finished Tuskegee, they all had a skilled trade. They could earn their money to go on to a higher school. That's what the masses needed and that's what Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, and all of them did for the <u>masses</u> of Negroes.

Chall: In your case, they assumed that your grandmother had your higher education in mind and you were going on to some professional school.

Albrier: Yes.

The Transition to Howard University: Vocational Choices

Chall: So, what in fact, did you do? At what point did you leave Tuskegee to go to another school?

Albrier: I left Tuskegee and lived with one of my grandmother's friends in Memphis, Tennessee and went to Fisk for half a year. Then I went on to Howard.

Chall: Why did you stay at Fisk just the half year?

Albrier: I didn't quite like it as well. I thought I'd get more out of school at Howard and I had friends there.

Chall: What were you then, about seventeen or eighteen--ready for college?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: What did you have in mind when you went either to Fisk or to Howard? What were your goals then?

Albrier: I always was attracted--I wanted to be a nurse. I wanted to be a professional. I didn't know what course I wanted to take up in nursing. I wanted to be a teacher or take up a higher course in nursing than a graduate nurse, or to teach nursing. I was going around in a circle; I just didn't know then.

Chall: You knew you were going to be a nurse.

Albrier: I wanted to be a nurse.

Chall: What did they give you at Howard? Was there a nurses training school in Howard?

Albrier: Yes. I didn't have the subjects that I should have had, and I had to take general education. By that time, I decided that I'd like to be a social worker.

Chall: So, then what did you do? That's quite a switch. For nursing, you'd be required to take a certain amount of chemistry, extra work in the physical sciences, and you wouldn't have to do that with social work, would you?

Albrier: No.

Chall: Did you not like the sciences?

Albrier: I liked the sciences quite well. It helped me in the social work field. I was more adequate in dealing with people; with discernment with people's problems. It made me a better social worker than I would have been a nurse.

Chall: How far along in the nurses training did you get before you switched fields?

Albrier: Two years.

Chall: That was at Howard?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Then you switched while you were at Howard to social welfare?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Did that create any problems? Were there any members of the staff who said no, you shouldn't be doing this?

Albrier: No.

Chall: They let you do it.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: What did your grandmother--

Albrier: They knew I was wandering around and hadn't found my way. A great many students are like that, especially those in the South. They see so much and they realize that there are so many fields. Oh, I can be of value to my race and my people if I take this or if I take that. They become kind of lost until they can find themselves--find what they can better do to create an ambition to help people, to help the race. In my day and time, that was instilled in us through all of the organizations, even through the churches. The pastors would tell us that we had to do something for our people. We were told that whatever we did reflected not only on us, but the entire race.

Chall: What a burden. That's quite a burden to carry with you.

Albrier: It's quite a burden, but it makes you very careful. For instance, if I should go out and pick a fight and injure somebody, that not only would hurt me, it would hurt the entire race, because I was a black person. I was doing something; I had no business reflecting on the race because the whole world was looking at us because we were coming out.

Chall: Did your grandmother have any special goal in mind for you except that you would progress in a professional field?

Albrier: No, she didn't. Just as long as I stayed in school and got an education and finally found what I would want to do.

Chall: Howard is where?

Albrier: Washington.

Chall: Washington, D.C. You went quite a way from home.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Was that your first experience far from home?

Albrier: No, I had been away from home quite a bit. I'd visited any number of cities with my classmates. They would invite me in the summer.

Chall: Out of Tuskegee?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: How far afield did you go?

Albrier: Oh, I'd go up to Memphis; I'd go to Atlanta, Georgia. There were schools in those different places. Some of the students were coming to Tuskegee; some were leaving Tuskegee, going to those schools. I had classmates who were going to different schools. Some were going back to school. I had several who went back to Birmingham to public schools because they had built a better public school in their vicinity. They returned. It cost less money.

Chall: Did you board at Howard?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: With family friends or just with people who were near the campus?

Albrier: The first year, I boarded with friends; the second year, I was on campus.

Chall: Did you have to work at all while you were at Howard, or did your family support you?

Albrier: Yes, I worked in the library.

Chall: By this time, were your father and grandmother still able to send you any funds, or were you on your own?

Albrier: No, they were able to send me little funds.

Chall: Tuition, and books--

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Did you like it at Howard?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: You graduated with a B.A. from Howard [1920]. Then what did you plan to do and then what did you do?

Albrier: Just before I graduated, my grandmother passed. Then I came West with my father.

Chall: He was here in Berkeley?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: What about your sister? Where was she at that time?

Albrier: My sister was in Tuskegee. But she came to Pasadena to my father. My father had married then.

Chall: Your sister came, then, before you came.

Albrier: Yes, about a year before I came.

Chall: Did she go to college here in this area?

Albrier: She went to school in Pasadena. I think she went to school here, too, for six months or so, to public school. Then my father went down to Pasadena to live.

Chall: So you came to Berkeley, is that right, as a college graduate? You were then what, about twenty-one?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: That was a different experience, I would guess [laughs] from Howard and Tuskegee. What was it like when you came to Berkeley in those days? Can you recall the way you felt about it?

Moving to Berkeley, California and Marriage, 1922

Albrier: I had been used to seeing many Negro people doing many different things, and there weren't many Negro people here at the time, and I was kind of lost. I just settled down to see what could be done. In the meantime, I married.

Chall: Did you marry someone from here in Berkeley?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: That was the first marriage. I've forgotten the name of your first husband.

Albrier: Jackson [William Albert].

Chall: What was he doing here?

Albrier: He was going to school, studying to be an engineer.

Chall: He died rather soon after--not too many years after you were married?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: You had one child, as I recall. Did you have one child?

Albrier: No, I had three children.

Chall: With Mr. Jackson?

Albrier: Yes. A boy and two girls.

Chall: What's your boy's name?

Albrier: William Albert.

Chall: Was he first?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Then your girls.

Albrier: Betty Frances [Kimble] and Anita [Black].

Chall: How far along as an engineer did he get in school? Did he graduate?

Albrier: He graduated. First he did some work in engineering and graduated from the University of Arizona first. Then he came to Berkeley to take up some other courses in engineering. I forget what courses.

Chall: That's when you met him here?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Then what kind of job did he have to support his growing family of three children?

Albrier: He first had a job in a construction camp, teaching them the stress of some building that I can't even explain. But he was with the construction company for a good while. He couldn't get very much work at the time in engineering.

Chall: Black engineers--

Albrier: He became very bitter about it.

Chall: It's interesting that he would have gone through the University of Arizona as a black student in engineering, which was, I would think, unusual.

Albrier: Very young, his mother passed in Oklahoma and he left to go into the army. He got a lot of his education and training in the army. He was a young black and had some education. The army, at that time, had many black men, who didn't have any education. They depended on those young black men who had education to assist the army with those who didn't. He did a lot of teaching. That's when he got through Arizona. He was stationed at Fort Huachuca in Arizona at that time.

Job Options Closed to Negroes: Handling the Frustrations

Chall: Then he went to the college part-time, or whatever he could and got an engineering degree?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: That was one kind of skill for which blacks weren't wanted.

Albrier: They weren't wanted and he wasn't prepared.

Chall: For that prejudice.

Albrier: For that prejudice. The same way, when I came West, they weren't prepared for black nurses. They just said, "Well, I know you're qualified, but we just don't hire black nurses."

Chall: Nor black engineers.

Albrier: They didn't say black at that time. It was Negro. "We just don't hire Negro nurses." So I thought I'd better go back South because in the South they did hire Negro nurses. Even white doctors had Negro nurses in their offices.

Chall: They did?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: I didn't know that.

Albrier: Out here. They didn't have them.

Chall: Because you'd had two years in nurses training, did that qualify you to be a nurse in some way or another? Had you thought of doing some nursing here?

Albrier: Yes, I could have done—

Chall: Practical nursing?

Albrier: Practical nursing, yes. Undergraduate work.

Chall: So you tried that?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: And that was a closed door.

Albrier: That was a closed door. I did work for awhile for Doctor--I can't think of his name--

Chall: It will come to you later.

Albrier: But he's a doctor who did a lot of obstetrics. Women were having babies at home then. I worked with him a long time.

Chall: What about the field of social work? Did you try that? Was there any place for you in social work that you'd finally gotten your training in?

Albrier: No, there wasn't any field open in social work then at the time.

Chall: So your career options were closed to you, too, weren't they, when you got here to the so-called free West?

Albrier: Yes. Then when I got married and the children came, I took up most of the time with them.

Chall: And your husband had a job, but not what he wanted.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Were you able to cope with the bitterness that came over him? How did you handle <u>his</u> feeling of bitterness?

Albrier: It was very hard and very tragic—the bitterness with him. He was so terribly bitter. At that time, he was taking on the idea--he had a lot of friends in San Francisco who were Russians. He was taking on the Bolshevik idea--I think that's what they called themselves then.

Chall: I see. Yes, this was in the early '20s, wasn't it?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Right after the Russian Revolution.

Albrier: Yes. He was very bitter--so much that it was a matter of hatred. He would become very, very angry if he applied for a job and they said, "We can't use you because we don't use Negroes."

Chall: Did you manage to keep that feeling of bitterness out of your system? That philosophy that your grandmother had instilled in you, did you manage to keep that on top?

Albrier: I didn't get a lot of bitterness that I hated people. I felt sorry for them. My grandmother had told me to feel sorry for those people because they don't know what they're doing and they're going to have to reap a lot of those things, and not you. But you must fight to remedy those things. Instead of becoming bitter, I developed a sense of retaliation and fighting.

Chall: Through the system?

Albrier: Through the system. I think that's what brought me into politics and that brought me to resent not having any black teachers in schools, and all those kinds of activities that I got into.

Chall: But your husband, Mr. Jackson, didn't see it that way?

Albrier: No.

Chall: Did that cause any problems between you?

Albrier: Well, in a way, because he became so bitter that he wasn't a very good provider at the time. It brought on some problems.

Chall: Do I understand that he died or were you divorced?

Albrier: He died.

Chall: So that left you with three small children. That was not easy, either.

Albrier: Can we stop now?

Chall: Yes, we can.

Albrier: I have a meeting at four at Chaparral House.
[end tape 1, side 2]

II FURTHER RECOLLECTIONS OF LIFE IN TUSKEGEE AND THE HOWARD UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE

[Interview 2: November 30, 1977]
[begin tape 2, side 1]

Tuskegee

The Family Home: Farming, Canning, Cleaning

Chall: I want to go back and find out something more about your home in Tuskegee with your grandmother. Would you describe the house that you lived in there. It was her home and it was where your father grew up, as I understand it. How big was it? Was it a frame house?

Albrier: It was a frame house painted white, and had eight rooms.

Chall: Eight!

Albrier: It had a huge basement. Most of the houses had basements because of storage. People like my grandmother stored vegetables and fruits for winter because it got very cold there. My grandmother always had a huge garden that she took care of, plus chickens. It was through her garden chickens that she was able to send me through school. She had all kinds of fowl: turkeys, geese, guineas, Rhode Island Reds, White Rocks.

I remember one time she wanted a very fine rooster and she paid twenty five dollars. We thought that was an awful lot of money to pay, but it was a pedigreed, fine rooster. She bought him from back East somewhere. She had choice eggs and choice chickens. I remember taking the chickens to people. One neighbor wanted to order a hen for roasting. She would call and tell my grandmother to pick her out a nice hen. She wanted to

Albrier: have a roast for dinner. I would take the hen. It was only fifty cents! Why, to look back now--you can't get a big fat, about three or four pound hen for fifty cents.

Chall: You can hardly find a hen.

Albrier: That's what the money was at that time. She had a large garden. She raised everything in the garden. There was a large strawberry patch. It was one of my jobs to pick strawberries and to sell strawberries to the neighbors; pick blackberries and dewberries when they came in and sell them to the neighbors, and to people. Besides, my grandmother would can a great many of those things in jars.

One thing about my grandmother and her garden I always remembered. She would plant two rows. She said one row was for me, and half a row is for friends, and the other half is for anybody, because she knew that people would come and take some of the things out of the garden; so she provided for them.

She was that way in her canning. She canned food for her own family; then she would can food for neighbors; then she would can three or four jars extra for people who came along who were poorer families and needed it.

Chall: In terms of neighbors, did that mean that the neighbors could purchase the food that was canned?

Albrier: Yes, that's right. She would give it to them if they were in need. They didn't have welfare or anything like that. The neighbors and church people took care of each other. Oftentimes, it was a poor family coming off the farms. There were a great number of families moving all the time to Tuskegee from plantations where they raised nothing but cotton. They wanted the children to go to school, to Mr. Washington, as they called him. They wouldn't have much food. My grandmother always had extra cans of food there for those people.

Chall: Was this a common thing to do?

Albrier: It was a common thing for her and her missionary society, which was the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Chall: That was the way the community, the black community, took care of its own.

Albrier: That's right. Then after Mr. Washington came and started the school, that was another reason why she canned extra food, too,

Albrier: because she would give a lot to the school. A great number of the older women at that time did. They helped him in the early days of the school that way. My grandmother's youngest sister was one of his first graduates. She and Miss Lucile Lane's (over on Ashby) mother were the first graduates of Tuskegee, of Booker T. Washington. That was 1800-something.

Chall: We can look that up.

Albrier: I'll look it up. I think I have the diploma.

Chall: What kind of help did she have on her farm? I think you also mentioned she had a cow and pigs.

Albrier: My grandfather was quite a farmer, too. She had about fifteen--more than fifteen--acres. I don't remember just how many acres, but quite a large farm.

Chall: After your grandfather died, how did she handle all that--when there wasn't a man in the house?

Albrier: She would hire students and neighbors. There was always a great number of students who needed to earn some money to go to school. And people in the community.

Chall: Was that their way of getting some kind of funds?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Did she give them cash or was it an exchange of goods?

Albrier: She would do both.

Chall: What were your chores around the house?

Albrier: My chores--I helped wash all those chickens and fowl. I had to water them--to see that the troughs were full of water all the time. And feed them. I'd help my grandmother sell them, and deliver them, and deliver eggs to the people who ordered eggs, and chickens.

Chall: And your sister? Did she have to do the same things as she got old enough?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Did your grandmother clean the chickens and take the feathers off before she sold them?

Albrier: She cleaned them for some, and others didn't want them cleaned. Others she sold alive, on foot and they did the cleaning. Many raised chickens of their own after starting them from those they bought. For some of the older women, and older families, and friends of hers, she did it herself because she had the hot water and the troughs and everything. She received a great deal of help on how to run her farm through the school. They used her farm as an example.

Chall: What about inside the house? What kind of chores were there inside for keeping the house clean? Who cleaned the house indoors?

Albrier: We all cleaned the house indoors. My grandmother's kitchen floor was oak. I remember she would pound up brick and mix it in with lye that she dripped through the ashes. The lye was made from water that she dripped through oak ashes and mixed it with pound-up brick; and we would scrub that floor. That floor was as white as could be. You could eat off it; and the sink, too.

Chall: Did she make her own soap with the lye and grease as well?

Albrier: Yes, she would make her own soap from the lye and grease for washing clothes and cleaning.

Chall: You say she had hot water. Does that mean that she--

Albrier: We had a big range with a hot water back--you don't see them nowadays. As the fire burned, it heated the water. It was connected to a faucet.

Chall: Inside?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: You had indoor water then. You didn't have to go out and pump it?

Albrier: No. She had a pump--two wells and two hand pumps. I don't remember before, but when the school developed, they ran electricity out to the neighbors. They connected up pumps and plumbing for the neighbors. But before then, everything had to be done by hand. They would wash--had washtubs--and would draw the water from the well or go to the spring. My grandmother had a huge spring, a beautiful spring; I used to like to see the water bubble up out of the ground and think what a miracle it was--when I was a child. Then the water would run on out in a stream on down through the farm. The cows would drink it. Then we had the wells. My grandfather was a well digger, so he knew.

Albrier: They laugh nowadays at people saying they would take a twig and find where water is. But my grandfather used to do that. He never made mistakes.

Chall: That's right, the water witch.

Albrier: He told the farmers that if you dig your well here, you'll get water. If you dig over there where you are, you won't get anything. They would try. They wouldn't pay any attention, but they'd come back and dig it where he told them. He would tell them they'd have to dig about thirty feet before hitting water. Dig another ten feet and you'll hit another stream, and you'll have a good well of water.

Family Standards and Discipline

Chall: Was your grandmother a stern disciplinarian? She had to rear the two of you girls. I suppose by that time she was getting a little older and she might have begun to have different ideas about child rearing than she did when she was rearing your father. But I wonder. Did she rear the two of you just about the same way?

Albrier: My grandmother was like all the old people in those days. They believed in obedience and they demanded you to obey. That was one of the main prerequisites of the family--that you had to obey. You mustn't lie, and you mustn't steal, and you must listen.

I remember my grandmother gave me a lesson in listening. She told me to go to the store and get some flour, and some sugar, lard, and something else. I couldn't remember. I went to the store and got three things and I couldn't remember, so she made me stand up on the floor until I could <u>think</u> what she told me to get, because she said I wasn't listening. "And if you go through life--you're a little black girl--and you'll have to listen to what people say. If you have a job, people don't want to tell you two, three times. So you just <u>think</u> what I told you--that other." I guessed it--finally guessed it. It was sugar. [Laughter] I named things and when I got to sugar, she didn't say anything; so I knew it was sugar. So, I went to the store and got the sugar. But that was quite a lesson. After that, I always listened to what she was saying. It was a <u>valuable</u> lesson for me that I didn't appreciate until later on in years.

Chall: I guess in the slave days, and even prior to that, what we know about the African tradition, is that it was oral. If you were going to pass information on from one generation to another about your own past history, you had to listen. As I understand it, some children were trained to pass on their background to the next generation.

Albrier: Yes, it was oral.

Chall: And they had to be good listeners.

Albrier: Yes, and good observers.

Chall: So she trained you in the same thing. Did she know how to read and write; did she ever learn that?

Albrier: She didn't know how to read and write real well, but she could read, and she could write a normal letter. She was taught how to read by a lady who lived in the house--one of the white ladies--who was a teacher in her master's house before she was sold. She taught her how to read and write because she wanted to read the Bible and she wanted to know how to write her name. So they would steal off and have their lessons, because it wasn't popular for slaves to learn how to read and write.

I think this lady was an abolitionist from what my grandmother said about her and from what I've read. She might have been an abolitionist who worked among the slaves in those days and tried to help them. My grandmother knew Sojourner Truth; they were great friends.

Chall: Is that so? How did she happen to know her?

Albrier: My grandmother attended some church convention on some plantation and she met her at that time.

Chall: And they kept in contact with each other?

Albrier: Yes. She knew her quite well after the Emancipation and slavery was abolished. She met her because she went East quite often.

Chall: Your grandmother?

Albrier: Yes. She would go East to church conventions, mostly church conventions. Church organizations.

Chall: Was this affiliated with the African Methodist Church?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Obviously, she must have been a leader in her church. Was it just among the women that she was a leader or was she a leader among the congregation itself? Had the men recognized her as a leader?

Albrier: Yes, in the congregation itself. The bishops and the ministers recognized her.

Chall: In terms of the leadership, in those days, do you remember whether an outstanding woman was recognized by the community, or whether women were expected to leave the leadership to the men?

Albrier: Well, the men were expected to be the leaders and not the women. But women were leaders. They were leaders in their family and in the women's groups.

[From here on, static caused by some mechanical problem in the microphone, blocked out most of the dialogue. The interview was retrieved through a combination of using the outline of questions, and Mrs. Albrier's painstaking care in filling in the missing words, sentences, and in some cases, lengthy explanations of issues and events.]

Communication: Telephones, Magazines, Women's Clubs

Chall: What was the general way to communicate in Tuskegee? Was it by phone or through other personal contacts?

Albrier: It was a good many years before we had a telephone. I remember when they first put in a telephone. They had them in school, but didn't have them in the community. When they ran those first lines, the line was a post with two wires.

A family named Patterson was having a telephone. There were two Patterson brothers and they had a trucking business. They hauled everything for people. They put in a telephone in their office which was in their home. Many people in the community went to see how the telephone would work. It was the kind that you pulled and rang a bell to get an answer after repeating the number by dialing. The Pattersons were the first family who had a telephone. They were ideal neighbors, and if important messages came for any of the neighbors, they would give them the message later. Later my grandmother got her own telephone.

Chall: How would your grandmother know when she was needed as a midwife?

Albrier: They would send her the message through neighbors and friends. People in the twenties and thirties were neighborly and felt a responsibility for each other. Children would also be messengers. They received a nickel or a dime for their service.

Chall: What newspapers or magazines did you have in the community?

Albrier: We didn't have any newspapers. Later, we had a little school paper, but we didn't have any newspapers in those days, that I know of. I read magazines, but I read them in the library usually. The library had those. The community and organizations like the Mothers Club gave money to the library to furnish the library with periodicals that they thought the children should read. Students were encouraged to read, along with their homework.

Chall: Would the women and men use the school library?

Albrier: Well, some of them would. I know one which was very popular that the women read was Parents Magazine. There were also Bible literature and other magazines, in order to increase their knowledge about the nation and the world in general. There were children's books for children that encouraged them to use the library. This was to encourage the youth in this habit--a way to obtain knowledge. The older citizens would go to the library and read.

Many citizens, young and old, had been denied education and they were eager to obtain an education in order to advance themselves in their employment and the community. I taught several older people how to read and write their names. They expressed the wish to write their names and to be able to read the Bible. This is true in the rural South even today. There are many citizens, black and white, as was disclosed by the army, who could not read or write.

My grandmother was a friend of the great emancipator, Harriet Tubman, who, like Booker T. Washington, knew the great need of education for the thousands of black youth in the cities and plantations in the South. They were also in the North, but the majority was in the South.

She talked with Harriet Tubman a lot on that. They had a Mothers Club. It was a very active club and women would come down to the school to lecture. What they lectured on, I don't know, because we kids weren't in this. But Mrs. Washington was able to get many capable, fine women from the North who wanted to do those things, to come down and lecture and talk to the women of the

Albrier: Mothers Club. That was the beginning of the Association of Colored Women's Clubs. They were a member of that association. It was started in New York by Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin.

They wanted to socialize and exchange ideas with the other women in the North. There were more women in the clubs in the North than in the South where they weren't quite as well organized. Naturally, they were organized around the school, and the teachers in the school went out into the neighborhood and organized the women in the neighborhood with my grandmother. So they had this large Mothers Club. Usually, those women also had children in the school. It was their great ambition that their children get an education.

Chall: Did they ever talk about women's suffrage--voting?

Albrier: They never talked about voting because black women didn't vote at that time in the South, but they were interested in the men voting if they could pay the poll tax. They were interested in getting rid of the poll tax so that they could vote. Women's suffrage wasn't very popular at that time. I think they censured any woman who got up and talked too much. They didn't know too much about politics. They were too busy becoming organized in their homes and women's groups, and in getting an education, and in helping to support schools.

Additional Insights Into the Tuskegee Philosophy

Albrier: Everyone in the community believed in an education and a vocation. The main thing was the vocation because they didn't have any kind of vocation. They realized that too many Negroes only knew how to pick cotton, and still lived on the plantation. They did not even know how to launder a dress, or to cook a dinner, or to set a table, or to clean a house. That's one reason they sent for Dr. Washington. He had a school to teach the masses of black youth only to work, and to be skilled in their work. There were differences in the type of education. Dr. Washington thought about the masses of black youth who needed to be trained in many work skills, which would outnumber those who wanted to be professionals.

Chall: Were you aware at that time, or later, of the difference in the philosophies of Dr. Washington and Dr. DuBois?

Albrier: I wasn't aware at that time of the philosophy but I would see how my grandmother cleaned the house and how hard she worked

Albrier: cleaning the house, and that she didn't know all the ways and materials of keeping a house which I had learned in school. She realized that herself. But later in school, we wondered why we were behind or did not have some subjects which we needed for a higher education.

When we asked Dr. Washington, he said that he was maintaining a large night school in order to help the hundreds of students who needed an education to learn a vocation or a trade. "You will be able to have a vocation to go out and get a higher education. That's what I'm preparing you for." But these other students will have a vocation so they will be prepared to earn a living, through their trades or vocations that they have chosen to learn. "You should be thankful and grateful that you're getting what you are, and you can go on out and get a higher education, with the help of a vocation or trade that you have learned here."

During his first lecture every year he said, "I'm preparing the groundwork to help you get that higher education because I'm not thinking of you students; I'm thinking of the masses of black people, the masses of young black people who need a type of education so they can earn a decent wage and a living as dignified citizens."

Chall: Do you think that was an incorrect approach to education of black youth at that time? Would you agree with Dr. DuBois?

Albrier: No. No, I wouldn't change it one bit, if I had to move those times back like they were. I saw students who were yearning to get an education, who were yearning how to learn to read and write their own name, who only had those ten dollars it took them a whole year to save for their first year of school tuition. Some had to walk, bum rides; some had to work very hard. Their parents helped them to get an education with their meagre earnings.

There I was with my grandmother, and comparatively comfortable. My grandmother talked to me and told me that I had a blessing that they hadn't, and I had the responsibility to help those students who wanted and needed an education. That was the feeling: that we were responsible to help these students on the farms who had only three months schooling during the year, because they had to stop going to school to cultivate the cotton, and later pick it.

I told my children and they couldn't believe it. They said that they were glad that they didn't live in those times. My great-aunt, my grandmother's sister, was a school teacher after

Albrier: she graduated. She taught five miles out from Tuskegee in a country church. She went back and forth to school, in the morning in her horse and buggy. Sometimes it would be so cold and I would go with her. She placed hot bricks on the floor, wrapped in paper, to keep our feet warm. I saw children when there was frost on the ground, still picking cotton--and they were not in school. My aunt would say to me, "Do you see how God has blessed you? Here you are, nice and warm in your buggy, going to school, and those children are still out there picking cotton. Now they won't be able to get into school until January."

Chall: Why was that?

Albrier: The children of families who lived on the farms or plantations in the South would only have three, sometimes four, months to go to school. Some started in December, January, February, and March to attend school. In April it was time to cultivate the cotton. They were out of schools, and the teachers had to work hard to teach them as much as they could while they were in school, those three or four months, because in April they were out again chopping cotton. A great many students from Tuskegee would go out to these schools and help the teachers teach these farmers' children, where the schools weren't adequate.

Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois: Vocational versus Academic Education

Chall: Was Booker T. Washington an exciting speaker? Did he have the ability to make you feel that you wanted to do what he asked of you?

Albrier: Yes, he was. He was so sincere; he touched and inspired. You could feel what he was trying to do and what he was trying to say for others. He brought out that sensitivity in people that they would like to do their share in helping others. That was a gift I think he had. That's how he was able to raise so much money for the school, throughout the United States.

Chall: Was he preparing the way for other black leaders who came after him--like Martin Luther King and Dr. DuBois?

Albrier: Dr. DuBois believed that black students needed to learn professions and advance. There were only a few doctors, lawyers, teachers--those who had skills. But Booker T. Washington was seeing the thousands on the plantations who had not the least bit of education. Booker T. Washington knew that they needed enough

Albrier: education to learn to work with their hands and become skilled at whatever they chose to do.

I'm sure Martin Luther King had the same characteristics as Booker T. Washington. It took some time before DuBois started. He was really from a different type of environment. But in the later years he became very cognizant of the fact that he had to give much more of himself, to the interest of the black masses, and be more sincere to the downtrodden blacks, and be more interested in them than he was in the class he was used to. As he said, the race couldn't rise any higher than the lowest.

Chall: He modified his stand later, didn't he?

Albrier: Yes, he changed his viewpoint and became a different type of person. That's one reason why he became interested in the people of Africa.

Chall: Pan-Africanism?

Albrier: Yes. I've always felt that Booker T. Washington was inspired by Frederick Douglass.

Chall: What about the influence of Booker T. Washington in the white community. He was criticized by Dr. DuBois and others for accommodating too much. I was wondering whether actually he was honored by the white community because he would seem to agree with whites, about the place of Negroes, and because it appeared he wouldn't rock the boat. How do you feel about such criticism of Booker T. Washington?

Albrier: Neither one of those men, Booker T. Washington or Carver, believed in keeping their people in their place. They could see in the future that the timing was not right to have their people be revolutionists; that they had so much to learn. They had to get a good education and they had to get some kind of economic stability. That's why they encouraged them to own their homes and own their farms, and raise their food, and go into industry and do their best; send their children to school and get an education. I feel that they knew that the next step would automatically come to the people then. They were not going to go into any kind of revolutionary ideas with the masses of people because that would affect the few, those who went to college and the university. That would not affect the masses of people in the South that they worked with.

"Earn Your Way"

Chall: Did Booker T. Washington consciously develop what would now be considered a conservative point of view or was it just what was already there in the community? Was he battling any militants at that time, or was he just doing, as you say, what he felt was necessary, knowing the community would follow?

Albrier: He was doing what he thought was necessary. He had in mind the militancy among the masses. They could have started a revolutionary idea in Tuskegee at that time among the students.

[end tape 2, side 1; begin tape 2, side 2]

They were concerned with masses of black youth and young people and their needs. They knew that it wasn't the time for them to go out and to start a revolution. Neither Dr. Washington nor Dr. Carver were bitter. That's one of the secrets of the black race--that they have existed today. Had they become a race that was bitter to the extent that they wanted to destroy everybody and get even with everybody in a deluge of hatred and bitterness, there wouldn't be any black people. So they were not bitter. They knew that they had to earn and they imbued that in the students: do your best to earn your way as men and women--through your example, through your education, through your employment and through your community, with the help of God.

Vivid Memories of George Washington Carver

Chall: How was Dr. Carver as a teacher?

Albrier: I nicknamed Dr. Carver "Ichabod Crane."

Chall: Why?

Albrier: I had read the story about Ichabod Crane. Ichabod Crane had a cutaway coat wrapped around himself. When I first saw Dr. Carver coming on the grounds, I called him Ichabod Crane "There goes Ichabod Crane." He always wore a cutaway coat and you would know he was Dr. Carver even if you didn't know him.

Albrier: He taught botany classes at Tuskegee. One of the things I remember that I often tell students about Dr. Carver is that he had a soprano voice--high toned, high pitched. He would ask you a question and he would say, [pitches voice high] "Mary Frances, tell me what class does this belong to; what family does this belong to?" He held up a bunch of grasses, weeds, and things like that. I'd say, "Dr. Carver, I think--" [Pitches voice high again.] "I think--I think--sit down, sit down. You don't think; you know." We students caught on to Dr. Carver--not to say "I think" in his class, because he wouldn't listen. He taught us that we shouldn't think; we should know. After that, I would just say, "Dr. Carver, it belongs to the grass family."

Chall: [Laughs] If you were wrong, at least you didn't say you thought.

Albrier: That's right. Those teachers had a reason behind the way they taught their students. We had to be very good. We had to know more than a hundred percent to earn a hundred percent when we'd get out in the world, because prejudice, the times, were still against us and we had to do more than our share. So they taught us more than our share.*

Boys and Girls: In School and in the Community

Chall: What about these girls and boys? Were you expected, as a girl, to go out and be as able and capable as any of these boys? Could you have studied something that they taught the fellows? If you would be interested in carpentry or something that would generally be considered the vocation of a young man--was that acceptable, or were you expected to learn only what was set aside for girls?

Albrier: No, that wasn't acceptable in those days. Women had their own vocation and their own trade to learn--their own employment to learn. Women didn't think about being electricians or anything like that. There was only one trade that was taught both girls and boys--and that was cooking and tailoring.

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*Within the past twenty years Mrs. Albrier has been honored on many occasions as one of Tuskegee's outstanding alumna by its Alumni Association. She has also received an award for exceptional service for perpetuating the Geroge Washington Carver story. ed.

Chall: What about cooking?

Albrier: They had cooking classes, but they were not mixed. The boys were in the bakery shop over in the dining room and the bakery department. There weren't any girls over there. They were in the domestic science department.

Chall: And that was a separate thing?

Albrier: Yes, that was a separate thing. In the school, the boys and girls did not sit together. The boys would sit on one side and the girls sit on the other side.

Chall: All the way?

Albrier: It was a very strict line. [Laughs]

Chall: [Laughs] From kindergarten on up?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: What about your social life in the community or the school? Was there any kind of social life that you had? Were there dances and parties for young people?

Albrier: Yes, there were dances and clubs for young people. Of course, at Tuskegee as in all other schools, there were the games. They had games like football, basketball, and different games like that, class parties, birthday parties, and other social activities. There were lectures, the choirs, the choral groups.

Chall: In the schools?

Albrier: Yes. All of those activities were there in Tuskegee. We were very fortunate. Dr. Washington was very fortunate. He traveled throughout the United States and Europe and he was able to persuade some of the finest teachers to come to Tuskegee. A great many of those teachers came because they wanted to learn themselves. They received so much from being there, helping to alleviate pain and wrong that had been done to the black people through prejudice.

Chall: Do you recall Mary McLeod Bethune ever coming to your school?

Albrier: No, I didn't meet Mary McLeod Bethune at Tuskegee. I don't remember her coming there.

Chall: What about Mary Church Terrell? Did she ever come down?

Albrier: No, I don't remember her, either. I am sure both of them visited Tuskegee, attending the many conferences held in the interest of black students and the thousands seeking education.

Howard University: A Different Community, a Different Philosophy of Education

Chall: When you were going to Howard, was there a different philosophy that permeated Howard from what you found in Tuskegee? If so, how did you accommodate yourself to it?

Albrier: Howard was a school where many of the teachers and the students were kind of aloof. There wasn't the atmosphere that Tuskegee had or Fisk had. It was a kind of aloofness--who you were and who your parents were--that type of society. I didn't quite agree, because being under my grandmother's teachings so long and her attitudes, I naturally would rebel. But anyway, I was there to learn and to finish an education, so it didn't bother me very much.

Chall: Did you make friends with any of the students?

Albrier: Yes, I made friends with many of the students and one of the main teachers I liked reminded me so much of my grandmother and Booker T. Washington--Dean William Pickens.

Chall: Was there an educational philosophy that was different at Howard--more stress on the intellect, on liberal views regarding the race, less on vocational training?

Albrier: Yes, there was. Stress was more on the education and professions than vocation. If you were going into a vocation, like nursing--which took some nursing and social service--some of those vocations you had to know to assist you in the academic field. Through your knowledge and skills of learning a vocation, that helped you earn enough money to go to college to become a member of a profession like a physician, professor of economics, history, etcetera. Many black students were employed many years in the vocations they learned as a gardener, plumber, carpenter, dressmaker, cook--which helped them to earn certificates in the universities, as only a few had parents who were financially able to assist them.

Albrier: But at that time, everybody admired you as a great successful person if you graduated from school, if you were going to school; and the other people were just masses of uneducated people. While in Tuskegee, we didn't look at them that way.

Chall: Was this an area of controversy or discussion among your friends up there, who maybe came mostly from the North and might have had different backgrounds? Were you able to convince them of anything else, of another point of view?

Albrier: Yes, in the southern areas we were taught to be sympathetic with the uneducated, to help them get an education and skills which would help them become good responsible citizens and be proud of their background and race. It was a great struggle and is still a struggle to reach down and pull your brother and sister up to the level of education because of the prejudice and hatred some citizens have been taught against black citizens. Many of them become so very bitter over conditions such as racism and bigotry. Many set up a business, worked at their professions and trades, or moved out of the South because they couldn't stand the conditions, which was the case with a great many of them--a great many of the students' parents, at that time. Those types of students were very easy to associate with; to exchange views and ideas.

Chall: Did you want to live in the North? Did you say something about moving back to the South, or had you not thought about that?

Albrier: I wasn't there very long when my grandmother passed, and I knew I'd be coming West where my father was.

Chall: You finished your three years there?

Albrier: Yes. I came West to visit him and went back to school.

Chall: You knew where you were going to go?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: What about the fact that at that time, as I understand it, the president of Howard was white?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: And was the faculty white as well?

Albrier: No, a few blacks, professors.

Chall: How did you feel about that? Did that cause you some discomfort or did you accept it?

Albrier: No, it just seemed to be automatic, because we knew the school, and the money was furnished by the whites, the government. We knew that in those days, there was a caste that didn't think a black person had the education or background enough to hold such a position. But we knew the time was coming when they would. We were all praying and striving to see that day come. We knew we had to earn it--we had to earn our way through the sweat of our brows; we had to earn through many hours of study to get those positions.

Chall: You accepted the fact that the faculty and administrative leadership was mostly white.

Albrier: Yes, and then too, some of the leadership of the whites would have been better than the blacks because they had better backgrounds of study and travel. They would have new ideas and could exchange them, and work with you, and inspire you.

Chall: Did you know Mordecai Johnson?

Albrier: Yes, I met him many times.

Chall: Did you have any class with him?

Albrier: No.

Chall: Was Kelly Miller on the faculty when you were a student? Did you have classes with him?

Albrier: He was on the faculty, yes, I knew him; had classes in philosophy with him.

Chall: What about Dean Charles Thompson?

Albrier: Yes, he reminded me so much of the viewpoints of Booker T. Washington. Only he would say, now the time has come when black students need higher education and to get into the other fields of endeavor.

Chall: Was Alain Locke a faculty member you knew?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Were you stimulated by the Howard classes, and by the life in Washington, D.C.?

Albrier: I didn't find it so stimulating. I was quite lonesome, and it was a different type of people. There wasn't the warmth that was in Tuskegee. Of course, I met any number of students who were from Tennessee and the South, and they were quite friendly.

Chall: What was it like for a black student in Washington? Was the prejudice any different from what you had experienced in the South, in Tuskegee?

Albrier: Washington was not a good place to live, especially for the blacks. There were slum areas there in Washington which were as bad as in any southern city. It was like any southern city to me because it had the same prejudices there. The students couldn't go to a theatre unless they sat upstairs, and you couldn't go into restaurants in certain places. There were certain places you couldn't go because you were a Negro. The same prejudice you faced in the southern states. It made you wonder if you were a citizen and if you should have an allegiance to this country.

Meeting the Foremost Negro Leaders

Chall: Did you ever hear Mary Church Terrell when you were at Howard?

Albrier: Oh, yes.

Chall: Was she inspiring?

Albrier: Yes. I met Mary Church Terrell in Negro club work. She, and Mrs. Bethune, were members of the Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Inc. That was organized to educate poor Negro girls and women in the twenties and thirties. This organization still exists.

Chall: Was she a kind of model for you during your life?

Albrier: Yes. She was the same type of person my grandmother was. What they both said was, we'd bide our time and we would work hard; then the time would come when things would open up. "But you must be ready. You must be ready for the same kind of job as a white person if you prepare for it. The same with Abraham Lincoln. He had to educate himself and he was ready when the time came. So they told us, "You get all the education you can. When the time comes for you to strike and get in position, you'll be ready." That was their logic.

Her life had been much different from a great mass of people. She had to try to put herself in the place of the other fellow. She had had a good education and she was married to a prominent lawyer and judge. She could travel and not face discrimination as a Negro.

Chall: Did you ever see or meet Mrs. Bethune while you were at Howard?

Albrier: No. I saw Mary McLeod Bethune in Washington. I saw her once when I was visiting in Virginia. She was busy in the South, building Bethune Cookman College. I'd only come in real close contact with Mary McLeod Bethune earlier when I visited her school, the Bethune Cookman College. That was before she started the National Council of Negro Women. I'd gone to her lectures and heard her, and visited her college--visited students in her college. But I came to know her quite well when she came West. I talked and visited with her a lot, and became very close to her.

The first time she came out was before 1945. She began to call all the black women who were heads of organizations--and I was then the president of the Auxiliary of Dining Car Employees. She wanted all the heads of the organizations to get together so they could number hundreds of thousands of black women, because she wanted to make inroads in the political life of the nations with representation. She came out again in 1945 in an advisory capacity to the United Nations.

Chall: Did you meet Carter Woodson when you were at Howard?

Albrier: Yes, I met Carter Woodson when I was at Howard. I went to his lecture and he was talking then about black history. He said we should look into our backgrounds of the history that we are losing and we should look into our backgrounds in slavery and in Africa. He talked a great deal about roots, as Alex Haley does today. He often said to me, "You should talk more to your grandmother and get the history of where she came from, and he talked to me about Africa. There were some African students in Tuskegee. Two,three African students were my classmates. And in my grandmother's church was Bishop Turner of Atlanta, Georgia, Bishop of the African Methodist Zion Church, who believed that the ties should not be broken with Africa by the American Negro people. He said, when you get your education, go back to Africa and teach the Africans.

Chall: He felt a strong link then with Africa?

Albrier: Yes. He would tell us about the homeland, Africa--about the Zulu tribes and other tribes that the American Negro people belonged to. It was from these teachers and ministers like Bishop Turner who talked so much about Africa, that I got an idea to question my grandmother and question some of the older people. I questioned quite a few of them and they gave me some of their background as they remembered about Africa.

Chall: Did they know their background well?

Albrier: They knew it and we lost a lot of the history by not recording it. If I had known what I know now, I'd have gotten quite a bit of history, because there were a lot of the old black ladies who lived near us and who knew their histories and African background.

Chall: When you went back to talk to them, did you take notes?

Albrier: A few.

When I met Carter Woodson, it was at Howard. Carter Woodson talked to students about black history and their ancestry.

My grandmother always said that she was Somebody and she came from being Somebody. My grandmother knew more of her history than she told us. I wasn't aware of the facts to question her as I would today. She had a feeling of pride in her background that gave her life meaning. Many people lost that pride because they didn't know their history.

For instance the Africans, when they came over as slaves, were from different tribes, from the different countries. I remember reading in a medical journal where African slaves had slipped an herb over with them that they planted in Georgia. If they caught them cultivating this plant, they would be whipped unmercifully. It was a plant that aided in abortions. That was in a pharmaceutical journal.

Woodson has been a great service to the Negro people in his outline of history and in building that organization that I'm a member of--the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History.

Chall: Did he inspire you at the time you knew him?

Albrier: Yes, but I wasn't inspired at that time. Those things just went over my head. I didn't think much about it until the later years.

Chall: You regret it?

Albrier: Yes, but it helped me to talk to the younger people and my children and to give them the inspiration through their history.

Chall: Now, at Howard, when you were going into nursing and social welfare, were some women thinking then of being doctors or lawyers? Were women encouraged at Howard to go into those other fields--into the professions which were not then common to women?

Albrier: Yes, they were beginning to encourage women to go into other fields, in high fields of learning such as teachers, professors, medicine, law, although there weren't many openings. There weren't the openings when I went there even for women to be professors in school. The woman had to do double what a man had to do in her work and her curriculum.

Chall: She had to compete with whites, and also to surpass them?

Albrier: Yes, she had to surpass them so far in order to get the recognition she deserved. They discouraged a great many women. They felt that they had this education that enabled them to raise their families better; to raise their standing in their communities, and to work better with Negro youth, inspiring them.

World War I

Albrier: It's funny, though, that in preparing the conditions to bring about some of these changes, every war that I've witnessed has opened doors, and those who were prepared, like my grandmother, were able to accomplish something--if they could be prepared and just wait. That seems to be one of the ideas of the times. God would bring about the changes.

Chall: What happened to blacks during World War I? What was their attitude toward the war?

Albrier: They were moving just about all over the country. They didn't see anything that was going to help advance the blacks by going into the war, although they had to. They were encouraged to go into the military and do their best, but they didn't go in with the type of feeling and enthusiasm that you'd think they would.

Chall: I suppose they couldn't relate to the slogans about saving the world for democracy.

Albrier: It was kind of a sorrowful affair because the relatives who were left were saddened. They didn't know if they would see their

Albrier: loved ones again. They'd say, "What are they going to fight for anyway? We have nothing to fight for. When they come back, they're going to have legs lost or have other problems." It was that kind of an atmosphere.

Chall: Did you take any interest in Dr. DuBois' Pan-Africa movement?

Albrier: I knew about it but I wasn't interested in it at that particular time. I just felt that he knew what he was doing; he was laying the groundwork for something.

Chall: What were the major black newspapers in the Washington area? Did you read those papers?

Albrier: Yes, there was the Pittsburgh Courier. I didn't have very much to do with that.

Chall: Did you keep in touch with what was going on in the black community through the press?

Albrier: I found at times some articles that were inspiring and elevating. I could learn about some of the everyday things that happened.

Chall: How much did you get to know about the black community in Washington?

Albrier: I didn't have much experience when I was at Howard with the black community. All black communities were engaged in surviving discrimination, and with employment, as they are today.

There wasn't much of a black community out here, so I kind of lost contact with the large black communities as I had been used to in Tuskegee and in traveling around with my grandmother, visiting churches in Alabama and Georgia.

Chall: Did you ever, at that time, feel concerned about school segregation--that it was wrong and should be abolished?

Albrier: No, I didn't give any thought to segregating the schools. It just seemed automatically that that's what was to be and that's what was. I went to black schools, and they didn't want black and white schools, and we were all separated in our communities, so I didn't give it any thought. When I did give thought to it, was when I married. Then I began to realize that it wasn't right to have segregated schools. They were not provided for. They were not to the white schools, which were given the largest amount of money and comfortable school buildings.

Chall: What about your social life at Howard? Did you go out on dates, or did you stay in the company mainly of your girlfriends?

Albrier: I was happy-go-lucky [chuckles] and I didn't care much about the boys. I liked to go out with the girls, or I liked to go with a boy to a game. I mostly liked to read or go to theaters, if I had the time, as I had small jobs at the school assigned to me to help pay my expenses. I also liked to go horseback riding, things like that. I was more out-door, coming from Tuskegee, from the farm. I still don't like anything to fence me in. [Laughter]

Grandfather's Influence: An Ideal Man

Chall: You were reared by a strong woman in what would be considered a female household: you, your grandmother, your sister. There were, of course, all your grandmother's workers on the farm--the students--who were, I suppose, mostly young men. Since your father was away from you, who were the men who could be what we today call male role models in your life?

Albrier: My grandfather was always a picture of the ideal man to me, because he was a Blackfoot Indian.

Chall: How old were you when your grandfather died?

Albrier: I was about seven or eight years old when he died.

Chall: So you knew him for a time while you were growing up?

Albrier: He was most of my picture of being a man. My grandfather never liked. . . He said a man wasn't a man if he hit a child or woman. He looked down on that. If a man hit a child or a woman around him, he would have to hit him. He would take him on in a fight.

Chall: How did he discipline you girls?

Albrier: Oh, I was the pet. I never got disciplined by my grandfather at all. [Laughter] My grandmother was the one who did the disciplining. Whatever I did was right in his eyes.

He was a great horseman, and quite a farmer. He was quite a friend of Dr. Carver. I remember he would ask Dr. Carver what to plant on different tracts of land. One year Dr. Carver told him to turn under that five acres of corn and not plant corn

Albrier: in that year. Well, my grandfather had been getting quite a few bushels of corn out of that five acres. He said, "I'll lose a lot of money. I'll lose my corn--I get quite many bushels of corn per acre."

Dr. Carver said, "Turn it under because you've planted corn enough now. We're going to plant something else. I have in mind planting something else there." My grandfather never argued because he said, "Those educated men, they know." My grandfather ploughed all the corn under in the winter and let it set. Dr. Carver came out there and he and my grandfather sowed. My grandfather said there were a lot of weed seeds. He didn't know what Dr. Carver was putting over on that five acres. "That's a lot of weed seed they put out there." When it came up, it was mint. And Dr. Carver told him, "You'll make more money off this mint than you did off the corn because the soil has given all of its nutriment to the corn. He told him, "When this grows up and it's ready for baling, then we'll bale it and I'll send it North. Then when they make peppermint oil and medicines out of it, you'll be reimbursed more money than you got for your corn." That's what happened!

Chall: Young as you were, you were old enough to understand what was going on?

Albrier: Yes, I understood. There was quite a lot of talk in the household. They wondered why Dr. Carver was going to tear up that nice corn. It was nice corn, too--long leaves. You'd take the fodder and tie them together. They called the leaves the fodder. The horses would eat that. Long ears of corn, nice corn. My grandfather made quite a bit of money off of his corn. They ground some for corn meal. They had a corn meal grist mill there. People would take their corn and grind their own.

Anyway, my grandfather obeyed Dr. Carver. He said, "He's an educated man of science, so I'll do what he says." I think he felt that he'd better see that he made his money back [chuckles] And he did. Dr. Carver taught, not only my grandfather a lesson, but he taught the other farmers in Tuskegee and the South. He helped them to know there are other crops that you can have for an income, that you did not have to plant only corn or cotton. He taught them that you had to replenish the nutriments and chemicals in the soil by changing crops every few years.

But my grandfather was to me an ideal man. He was strong and kind. He didn't like to see women and children mistreated.

Albrier: That was known throughout the neighborhood. If he heard of a man beating his wife, he would have to beat him. My grandfather believed in the Great Spirits of the Indians, whereas my grandmother was a strong Methodist. He was not as religious as my grandmother and didn't go to church as often. They didn't quarrel about it. He was a little more bitter than Grandmother because he felt the whites had mistreated the Indians and taken away their land. But he had traveled a lot and could see the failures of the Indian, also.

[end tape 2, side 2]

III THE FIRST DECADES IN BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA, 1920-1940

[Interview 3: December 7, 1977]
[begin tape 3, side 1]

Albrier: That was Mr. Campbell, who brought me home in the car. He's the chairman of the Berkeley Committee on Aging. We came home around Ellis and Ashby and saw them digging up the ground for the new South Berkeley Center that they're going to dedicate.

Chall: So, it's really only a ground breaking, isn't it?

Albrier: Yes, a ground breaking. There'll be three in one day.

Chall: How long do you think it will take to finish them?

Albrier: It will take a year or more. They won't be finished until December or next January.

Chall: Then there'll be other places for seniors to go besides where they're going now?

Albrier: South Berkeley uses McGee Avenue Baptist Church Educational Hall for their center. We are still using the Lutheran church school on University Avenue. West Berkeley Center is in one of the housing projects--I think it was one of the old buildings. They remodeled it for a temporary center. They will be located at Sixth and Hearst for the new West Berkeley Center.

Chall: So you'll all be moving out of the churches then.

Albrier: Yes. [Laughter]

Chall: They'll fill up those buildings again with some good social programs. They're good buildings.

Moving to Berkeley, 1920

Chall: I wanted to find out today about the first decade or so that you had in the Bay Area because your scrapbook basically starts with about the mid-thirties. So, there's a whole decade that's kind of missing in your life.

You had made several trips West to see your father from time to time, hadn't you?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: So you knew what this community was like.

Albrier: Yes. Only I didn't come to Berkeley some of the trips. It wasn't until 1910 that I came to Berkeley because when my father first left the South, he came to Pasadena with a bunch of his friends, and I visited him in Pasadena. Then he left Pasadena and came up north looking for a job. In 1915 I came West when he and my stepmother were established here in Berkeley.

Chall: He was a chef, then, for a fraternity?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: He wasn't living in the fraternity house, though, was he?

Albrier: No. He had charge of a fraternity house, and I don't remember the name of it.

Chall: Was your stepmother working out of the home at all?

Albrier: No, she didn't work out of the home. She was a very fine dressmaker and ladies' tailor. She worked at home, taking in sewing and dressmaking.

Chall: They didn't have any children?

Albrier: No.

Chall: Were you aware how segregated a community Berkeley was; did it seem any different to you from the South?

Albrier: I wasn't aware when I first came to Berkeley there were not many Negro people out here and in the West. You only saw them if you went to church. I could walk all over Berkeley all day and see

Albrier: just about two Negro people. I was quite lonesome and it kind of set me back. I was just quite lonesome from coming out of school where there were all Negro people. In the South, there were hundreds of Negro people, and when I came out here, there were just a few families.

Chall: When you moved out here permanently--was it 1920--were there more as a result of the war?

Albrier: No, there wasn't.

Chall: Children or--

Albrier: No, there weren't very many.

Chall: What did you do--was it in 1920 when you came out, finally?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Did you move in with your father--into their home?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Was your sister with them, too, at that time?

Albrier: Yes. My grandmother had passed then. My father brought my sister and me to Berkeley.

Chall: Where was their home?

Albrier: They lived on Grove Street. The house is still there on Grove Street and--I'll have to remember it later.

Chall: Did you have white neighbors?

Albrier: Yes, white neighbors, and my sister attended school--there were just about three or four blacks in the school and in her class. My father belonged to a white church, to the Nazarenes. That was all white. There were just two families--two black families in that church.

Chall: That's unusual that he had nothing to do with his former Methodist church.

Albrier: My father had gotten accustomed to that. He was quite a mixer and had a great many white friends. They never looked at each other or their color or their race.

Chall: How did that seem to you? Did you go to church with them from time to time?

Albrier: Yes, I went to church. By my father's attitude, by my stepmother's attitude--why it didn't make any difference to me. I just saw people as people.

Chall: So they welcomed you--

Albrier: In Tuskegee, my grandmother had a great many white friends. There were a great many people whom she had reared as children, or helped their families, in her lifetime. They were in and out of her house just as if they were her own.

Chall: Even though you lived in a segregated neighborhood.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Was your father as light-skinned as your grandmother? Could he pass as a white man?

Albrier: No. He had a light brown complexion.

Chall: Were you trying to find work soon after you arrived here? Did you think about working as a nurse or a social worker?

Albrier: No. For a while, I didn't. I stayed and helped my stepmother with her sewing. Then later, I married.

Chall: How much later?

Albrier: Oh, it must have been about two years later.

Chall: Married in 1922, then?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Mr. Jackson was a Negro.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: How did you happen to meet him?

Albrier: He was attending the University of California. He had attended the University of Arizona and he was studying to be an engineer. He was taking up engineering at the time, in order to complete this course.

Chall: You had happened to meet him at--

Albrier: He had retired from the army. He went into the army when he was quite young. In fact, the army trained him and looked forward to training him as a doctor, but he decided he didn't want to be a doctor. When he went into the army, there were very few educated blacks. Most of them were illiterate. The young men who came in, they had the job of teaching the older uneducated men. He decided when they moved to Fort Huachaca in Arizona that he would retire from the army and not serve another term. He would go to the University of Arizona, which he did. Then he came to Berkeley.

Chall: When you met him, he was still in school?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Was he much older than you or about the same age?

Albrier: He was about fifteen years older than I.

Chall: Did you meet him at some social organization for black people that was in the area? How did you happen to meet him?

Albrier: He came to my father's house to see some other students who lived in my father's apartments--my father had roomers. My stepmother met him first and then later I met him.

Chall: He hadn't been married before?

Albrier: No.

Chall: After you were married in 1922, did he continue at the university until he had some degree?

Albrier: He only continued about six months; then he got a job with an engineering firm. He became very bitter on that job. At that time, there was unrest among students--beginning to be an unrest. There was a radical bunch, I think. They called them Bolsheviks at that time. He met a great many of that radical bunch in San Francisco. He became very bitter because certain positions and jobs that he applied for, he could have had, but he was denied just because he was a Negro.

Chall: Did you say that you were separated?

Albrier: He went East and he came back. He got a job in the East and came back a couple of years. Then we separated.

Joining the Marcus Garvey Organization

Chall: During that time--as I understand it from the article on Marcus Garvey--about 1921, you had joined the Garvey organization.* That might be wrong, but let's see--so you might have already been a member of the Garvey group before you were married. [The Universal Negro Improvement Association]

Albrier: What dates are the Garvey groups?

Chall: This article says that [reading from article] "Marcus Garvey went to Oakland, California to speak to the black masses in the Oakland Auditorium in 1921. Mrs. Albrier was there. Mrs. Albrier was one of the huge black throng who clapped and cheered enthusiastically at Marcus Garvey's words." In 1921.

You started with the Garvey movement, at least appreciating him, in 1921, when you first heard him.

Albrier: Yes. That was when he was building his organization. He was lecturing. He would lecture in churches and the ministers would encourage their audiences to hear him.

Chall: When he spoke at the Oakland Auditorium, that was a large meeting.

Albrier: Affair. Yes.

Chall: How did Mr. Jackson view the Garvey movement? You apparently got into it and thought it was good. How did he view it? If he was by that time, or shortly thereafter, interested in the Communist movement--did he appreciate Garvey at all?

Albrier: Mr. Jackson felt that Mr. Garvey was too much influenced by the English. You see, he was from Jamaica and was influenced by the English regime and English ways of doing things, and English organization. But he didn't understand why Mr. Garvey was doing those things.

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*Raoul C. Peterson, "Garveyism in California: A Lady Remembers," Core, Fall/Winter, 1973, pp. 20-22.

GARVEYISM IN CALIFORNIA: A LADY REMEMBERS



"What night is to day, woman is to man."– Garvey. Women like Mrs. Albrier added strength to Garvey's movement. Van Der Zee Institute

by Raoul C. Peterson

An exclusive interview with Mrs. Frances Albrier, who was Vice-President of The Women's Auxiliary of The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Oakland, California in 1923.

In reviewing the Black Nationalist or Pan-African implications of Marcus Garvey's UNIA Movement of the early 1900s, it is most important to get the ideas, opinions, feelings and attitudes of the people who were actively involved in the movement. Mrs. Frances Albrier of Berkeley, California, is one of these people.

Mrs. Albrier, 74, was born in Mt. Vernon, New York in Sept. of 1898. Her mother died when she was three years old, so she was sent South to Tuskeegee, Alabama to be raised by her grandmother. She has a vivid and accurate memory of lynchings which occurred in the South, particularly in Savannah, Ga. "I can't stand to see a black satin shirt to this day," she said, remembering seeing her first. A Black man hung near a tree near a bible meeting wearing such a shirt. She was only ten years old then. Later, she married, came to Berkeley, California and had three children. Her husband worked on the railroad in California in the early 1900s.



The Black Cross Nurses, part of the women's auxiliary of Garvey's movement of which Mrs. Albrier was a member. Van Der Zee Institute.

Marcus Garvey went to Oakland, California to speak to the Black masses in the Oakland Auditorium in 1921. Mrs. Albrier was there, recalling that the Chief of Police did not want him to speak because he was a "radical" and "un-American," but finally relented; and he, of course, was to attend this event. Marcus Garvey was forewarned not to say anything "offensive." On this day, Marcus Garvey spoke most eloquently in his Jamaican accent about self-esteem, and pride in color and features.

"Look at me, I'm a handsome Black man with African features." He agreed with the Klu Klux Klan: "Keep the races separate and pure. We want our race pure—we would have been if whites hadn't tampered with us. Throw away your children's white dolls and give them Black dolls, so they get the beauty of the Black Image. You help psychologize your children by giving them white dolls. The chains of slavery have been broken but Blacks are still slaves psychologically." He called for trade with the West Indies and Africa, so that Blacks could build up businesses and raise their standard of living. He didn't tell all Blacks to go to Africa but he did try to recruit scientists, engineers, technicians and professional Black people to go to Africa to strengthen it and build it up, so that all Blacks could proudly look to Africa as their "Mother Country."

Mrs. Albrier was one of the huge Black throng who clapped and cheered enthusiastically at Marcus Garvey's words.

"He had a way of appealing to all classes both educated and uneducated," she said, "And I decided then and there to join his movement because I wanted to put my foot on African soil before I died."

So, she became actively involved in the Women's Auxiliary of the UNIA which had a component called the Black Cross Nurses. These women secured financial aid, taught the uneducated, and circulated among the community to bolster moral support in the movement. She remembers quite vividly the resplendent parades, the smart, colorful uniforms, and elegant plumed hats and bands designed to give Black people a sense of dignity and racial pride. These women also put on plays, skits and programs for Black folks illustrating many of Marcus Garvey's ideas—one example, being the Black Star Line, a Black steamship company to be owned and operated by Black people. She expressed her excitement and pride in seeing this dream become a reality in witnessing the start of the maiden voyage of the first of two ships purchased by the UNIA with a Black captain and crew. Mrs. Albrier served the cause faithfully and was elected Vice-President of the Women's Auxiliary in Oakland, giving what time she could while raising her three children.

As we know from history, financial disaster followed and Marcus Garvey was imprisoned for fraudulent use of the mails. Mrs. Albrier stated that she believed that this was the downfall of

the organization, which totally collapsed about two years afterward without his forceful leadership.

"Marcus Garvey completely trusted those around him and some unscrupulous men in high positions in the UNIA 'ripped him off'," she said sadly. Although the followers in the movement tried vainly to raise funds to free him and wrote letters of support to him in prison, he now was verbally crucified as a charlatan. Then fear set in to the members and followers of the UNIA as they heard the insults and allegations hurled at Marcus Garvey.

"Marcus Garvey wants to send everybody back to Africa—I haven't lost anything in Africa," became the popular catch-all phrase among the non-believers.

Mrs. Albrier joined many other Black organizations and continued raising her children, but her sympathy and support was still with Marcus Garvey. She has in her possession, among her mementos, a typewritten, signed letter from Marcus Garvey, written in London, England, to Mr. W.A. Deans of Oakland dated 1937, in which he was still trying to enlist support and funds to reform his movement. This letter is cherished by her.

In 1958 another dream became a reality for Mrs. Albrier. She set foot on African soil for the first time. The occasion: Nigerian Independence. While there with a press entourage from California, she also visited Liberia, Senegal, Guinea, and Ghana. While in Ghana, she was surprised and elated to see a ship, The Black Star, named in honor of Marcus Garvey's movement. She felt proud to have been a part of his movement.

Mrs. Albrier is still very much an active person in "what's happening now" to our people. Among the groups she participates in are: Senior Citizens of Berkeley, Senior Center Assistant, Model Cities of Berkeley. She is also a member of the Board of Directors and a life member of the National Council of Negro Women; a life member of CORE and of the NAACP; and is involved in various church activities.

As the writer of this article, I can't resist saying that it was a fantastic experience to meet a woman like Mrs. Albrier who has given and sacrificed so much of herself for our "struggle," while always keeping a never-wavering faith that things will get better for us. I guess that's what it is all about. ■

Albrier: Mr. Garvey wore the uniforms--the English uniforms--and all of that was familiar to him. But he was appealing to the black people. He was instilling in them pride in themselves, the same as Martin Luther King started out doing.

Chall: I see. And he was also appealing to black unity, black business, and I would think this might have appealed to Mr. Jackson, since the white businessmen were not allowing him to work. But it didn't appeal to him at all, that movement.

Albrier: Not very much. He couldn't see how Mr. Garvey was going to organize the whole world, take people back to Africa, and build a country for the blacks in Africa.

Chall: That was a rather ambitious objective.

Albrier: He just didn't see through that program of doing all those things just then. In fact, his friends associated with a crowd of students, university students, that only saw revolution. They had to revolutionize the whole world--which was their own thinking.

Chall: Were these black and white students?

Albrier: Black and white students, yes.

Chall: There was, at one time--and I'm unclear about the dates--but there was at one time, an attempt on the part of the Communist party in the United States to organize blacks. They never really made up their minds what they wanted. A sort of segregated group of states of their own, which would be considered their own country in the United States, in the South, or some other arrangement--but they were trying to get them into the party and influence them.

Albrier: Yes, they were organizing the students and citizens like Mr. Jackson and university black students. They were together with the whites. Then they had another group of the working citizens. They were in another group and they never saw each other. Groups like Mr. Jackson's and then the students would lay plans for this revolution--how they were going to do it, and how they were going to work it, and the difference in the countries.

Chall: Do you think he was actually--

Albrier: I don't know too much about it. I remember the government didn't like what they were doing and took some papers from Mr. Jackson one time. They came and searched his room.

Chall: Was this after you were married or before?

Albrier: After.

Chall: At that time, you were working as a Black Cross nurse in the movement, the Garvey movement?

Albrier: Yes. That was an organization in the Garvey movement where the black nurses were organized together to get them to have more affiliation with each other and to help each other. I don't know whether he thought there was going to be another war, but I think he did. They would be prepared to take care of their communities, if there was a catastrophe--another war. They could serve in the war. A great many of those women, at that time, remembered their parents who served in the Spanish-American War. We had quite a few of them--and they were black nurses and helpers.

Chall: I understand that in World War I, black women weren't allowed to be part of the Red Cross.

Albrier: No, no.

Chall: So this was an opportunity for them to become a part of the nursing corps in a disaster?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Since there wasn't a disaster, what did the nurses do? Were they working in the community?

Albrier: They worked in the community service.

Chall: As nurses?

Albrier: Yes. That was part of their job.

Chall: What did you do as a Black Cross nurse?

Albrier: I instructed a lot. I instructed the Black Cross and organized them.

Chall: In Oakland and Berkeley?

Albrier: Yes. And lectured to them to give them an incentive to join. We were able to get a great many of them so enthused, interested, that they went to school. Some became practical nurses and some of the younger girls in the group went into training.

Chall: Where could they get nurses training?

Albrier: They went back to Tuskegee and to other schools, a few in the public schools that qualified.

Chall: Because there was no training for them here?

Albrier: No. Except those who went to the university. About four or five went to the university, into training. Two went to the university in San Francisco; two went into training in Los Angeles.

Chall: As a result of working in this group, did you then begin to meet other black people whom you hadn't met before in the Bay Area community?

Albrier: Yes. Before then, I began to meet a great many black people, large groups of black people whom I didn't know lived in California. I only met those who went to my father's church and those who went to the Methodist church groups. Those other groups I hadn't met. I hadn't met the larger groups. That work helped me to meet the women's groups, large groups, church groups--both Baptist and Methodist, and club groups. I began to meet more people.

Chall: You realized there was a rather large Negro community here that you hadn't known about.

Albrier: Yes, but they were scattered all around in different places.

Chall: There must have been a black neighborhood, or was there? Or were there many black neighborhoods?

Albrier: There wasn't. At that time, there wasn't as much discrimination as came later. You could live anywhere if you could afford to pay the rent.

Chall: I see. Anywhere.

Albrier: Yes.

Some of the old families, we didn't know they didn't own their homes until the last war. People began to come in and buy houses and their houses were sold. The family had lived there for years, and even the great grandchildren didn't own their homes.

Chall: Was there a reason why they didn't?

Albrier: No, they just didn't have the incentive to buy, I guess.

Chall: Nothing would have prevented them from owning the house?

Albrier: No. They didn't buy; they just continued to pay rent. Leaders like Marcus Garvey, those were the things they began to inspire in the black people--to tell them they had to be an economical asset for themselves. They had to own property, and they should own their homes. They should begin to have a part in the economic growth of a city in the country that they lived.

The Philosophy and Dream of Marcus Garvey

Chall: As I read this issue of the magazine and some other material on the Garvey movement, I got the feeling that not only did he instill pride in blackness--which is certainly something we didn't hear about again for quite some time--but that he had a strong feeling for really being separated as races. He was opposed to the philosophy of the NAACP and W.E.B. DuBois, who were interested in integration. He took a strong exception to that. Now, did this create any conflict within you? Coming from your own background. You were not anti-white, you joined your father's church here, and you were comfortably integrated as much as you could be. This seemed like a separatist movement. Did that bother you any?

Albrier: In a way, it did. I had a long talk with Mr. Garvey when he came out here with some of his people from his office in New York, about the movement and why he was proposing separate races. Mr. Garvey was an internationalist; he was from Jamaica. He was comparing the Negro people in the United States, and the Negro people in the West Indian Islands, and the Negro people in black Africa. He saw how they were <u>all</u> exploited. He said that the reason they were not elevated and were not able to get up and be somebody in the world as a race, was because they were all so separated. They all saw through the eyes of different nations and different nationalities. The only continent they knew was their continent, where their roots were, was Africa.

He said that they [whites] didn't like the Japanese any more than they liked the Negro; they didn't like the Chinese any more than they liked the Negro; and they didn't like the Jewish people any more than they liked the Negro--but these minorities had a home base. They had a country. The American Negro over here didn't have any country. Neither did the British Negro.

Albrier: So their own home country was Africa. It was there that they should establish a country all their own, and that's what he wanted to do.

When he gave out the call that blacks should go to Africa, many of the black people in this country didn't want to go to Africa. "Why did he want to uproot them?" He told him that he didn't want all of them in Africa. He only wanted the engineers and the scientists to come to this plot that he had picked out, and to build it into a country or a home base, where you could go if you wanted to leave the United States, and that you could call your own country.

Chall: You'd have sort of a united power base.

Albrier: The black people got it all mixed up and said that Marcus Garvey wanted all of the black people to leave and go to Africa. He told them he didn't because there weren't enough jails over there to hold them. The ones he wanted to come were the scientists and the teachers, and those who would build up a country, so they could look forward and say that, "that's our country." All over the world, no matter where they were, their country was this portion of Africa that he had chosen. That way, he could give pride.

He wanted to organize them together economically. For instance, in Jamaica and the West Indian Islands were certain crops of food that the people couldn't buy and they couldn't raise, because the English said, "We're not going to have a corn crop. We're going to raise something else. England needs a different type of food." But if he had them organized in the United States and they had their own ship--which he proposed and bought--a White Star line ship--then if they decided that they needed to raise some more corn, they could raise the corn by the ton in the West Indies Islands, bring it on their ship to the United States, and market it among Negroes in the United States. Or they could produce and sell from the United States to Jamaica, or anywhere else.

They could start commerce among black people, among the black nations where the black people were. Then they would begin to propagate employment. They would get more economical assets and be, as a whole, a group of people that was respected. He said, "All Jews don't live in Jerusalem, and all Chinese don't live in China; all Italians don't live in Italy, but they all look back at their own country." That way, he felt that the black people in America--they'd been so torn apart by slavery

Albrier: and dehumanized from slavery--they could get together and bring about a kind of pride in their race and in themselves. That was his dream.

Chall: When you got the whole picture, then, it didn't bother you any?

Albrier: No. I agreed with him. If that could be done, it would be a great thing to do. You see, before then, the Negro people in the United States were ashamed of Africa. They were ashamed of their skins being black. They didn't want any part of being affiliated with Africa and those other countries. Those who lived in other countries, the West Indian people, thought that they were better than the Negro people in the United States, "Because we don't have as much discrimination as you do over there. We don't have to contend with such things as that." It was a division that he was trying to bring together and that's what I saw. That's why I was part of his movement. Black people throughout the world were discriminated, exploited, and dehumanized against themselves --even tribes in Africa against other tribes.

Chall: What about the attitudes of other black people whom you would gradually meet? If you were speaking before clubs, women's clubs of the churches, there I suppose you would see a difference of opinion. What kinds of people opposed the Garvey movement as you met them?

Albrier: The only thing that most black people opposed in the Garvey movement was his saying they should go back to Africa--that they should have an African country. And that many Negroes should aspire and build up Africa.

Chall: The other parts of his philosophy of being proud of being black, educated and enterprising, that didn't bother them any? They accepted that?

Albrier: They accepted that, yes. He instilled that in them and they began to think about it--that they <u>were somebody</u>. He laid the groundwork for the thirties, the forties, the sixties. He laid that groundwork for the sixties that they had--that wave of civil rights--pride in yourself, black is beautiful, your hair is beautiful, you're a beautiful person, you see. He was just a forerunner of those things.

Chall: There's certainly a thread of his economic determinism in the Black Muslim movement, isn't there? Owning their own bakeries, businesses, and schools. There's a strong black identification in so many ways, in that movement.

Albrier: Yes, that was the same type of movement that Marcus Garvey could see. He didn't believe in dividing the religious. He didn't go into that. Religion takes care of itself, but the people as a whole. The way he saw it was that that would stop them from being exploited--not only in America, but all over the world. He looked at the predicament and condition of black people all over the world.

Chall: He seemed to have a very broad understanding of what was happening all over the world among blacks.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: You then stayed with the movement until it sort of died out in the late twenties and thirties?

Albrier: I stayed in the movement, I think about seven years, until it died--until they arrested Marcus Garvey; finally sent him back to Jamaica. Then the movement still survived in a small way in Jamaica and England.

Chall: Did that leave a vacuum in some of your activities? Did you then not know just exactly what to do with some of the ideas that you had?

Albrier: No, we still had NAACP and educational women's groups, and organizations that we were still working with to build up citizens. But the seeds that Garvey planted were not dead. There were still hundreds of black youth that needed schools and needed to go to schools. We had schools coming up that needed help like the Bethune Cookman College. Tuskegee still needed help; Howard University still needed help; Fisk University, and other small schools in the rural districts of the South and in the South.

Chall: You just moved wherever the need was?

Albrier: Yes, I worked in organizations that contributed to these different schools.

Chall: You said that sometime in the mid-twenties--I'm not sure what the date was--that Mr. Jackson went East and found a job.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: How far east was East?

Albrier: He went to New York.

Chall: All the way.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: What did he do there?

Albrier: For a while, he worked in a book shop; he managed a book shop for a firm. I don't remember the firm's name. He contracted pneumonia, and died in 1930.

Chall: Had you planned that you would ever be living together again?

Albrier: No.

Chall: Did he contribute to the support of your family?

Albrier: Just a small amount because he said he couldn't get the jobs. He wasn't hired for the jobs he applied for--they didn't hire Negroes, which made him very bitter at the government. He lost faith in our constitution so far as the black man was concerned. He felt there was more hope in the communist philosophy regarding the workers of a country. The majority of Negroes in the United States were working citizens; through their work--one hundred years of slavery--with their strength and hands, they built America. (United States) That's what made him very bitter.

Going to Work: A Variety of Jobs

Chall: What did you do, then, to help support your family? You were practically the sole support for the children. Did you have to go out and work?

Albrier: For many positions, jobs, I was told, "I am sorry, but we do not hire Negroes." For instance, a clerk in stores; a receptionist. I got a lot of help from my father. Then I worked in different fields. When WPA came on, it opened up a lot of employment for working mothers at that time. I worked in the hospitals.

Chall: On a WPA project?

Albrier: Yes. I worked in Highland Hospital.

Chall: That's a public hospital. It had to take a black girl in?

Albrier: Yes, that was WPA. A great many of the private hospitals didn't hire blacks. The WPA came and counted us through political activities. They could not exclude black practical nurses. Before then, I worked in a book bindery shop.

Chall: WPA, too?

Albrier: No.

Chall: It wasn't WPA?

Albrier: No.

Chall: What kind of shop?

Albrier: I did it on WPA, because they set up a book bindery.

Chall: Now, the book bindery that you worked in prior to WPA, was that a black organization?

Albrier: No, it was white. It was just a small book firm that put the backs on books. But WPA was more extensive because they taught you how to take a book that was falling all apart and put it together; then put a new binding on it and put it back in circulation. We did a great many books for schools.

Chall: That was a good public service.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: In this area, were the blacks separated out in the WPA project?

Albrier: No. Everybody worked together because that was federal government. There was no separation there.

Chall: I understand that in other parts of the country, they did separate the races.

Albrier: We heard that in other parts of the country; but not in California.

Chall: I see. Kept them together.

Albrier: I don't know about Los Angeles, but I know up here, in the northern part of the state.

Chall: How long was your father living in this area--in the Berkeley area? Was he alive here for a long time?

Albrier: He lived in this area for a good while. No, I don't remember. But then he went back to Pasadena. My stepmother had cancer and she went back to Pasadena to be near a physician she thought helped her at that time. She passed; then later my father went back to Pasadena to live. He said it was warmer there. This damp weather was detrimental to his health. He had a home in Pasadena.

Chall: Did you decide to stay here in Berkeley?

Albrier: My sister went back to Pasadena and married in southern California and went to Riverside. I stayed here.

Chall: Why did you stay here? Any special reason?

Albrier: I was more accustomed to northern California; had friends here, and I liked northern California better than I did southern California. When I visited southern California, I found a little more prejudice there than here in northern California.

In northern California I did all kinds of jobs, even housework. I met some very wealthy women. I met one lady one day and she said she needed a person who knew how to serve a table because her housemaid had left, and she always had a lot of guests. She asked me if I knew anyone because she wanted perfect table service. I told her I had learned that in Tuskegee. She knew about Tuskegee; so I got the job in her home. I was the second maid. All I did was to answer the doorbell and telephones, and to serve the table--the meals. She had four boys and two girls. It was a large family. She said, "That's a lot of walking. There's a lot of things you have to do." That was one of the nicest jobs.

Chall: Was that in Berkeley?

Albrier: No, that was in San Francisco.

Chall: Did you have to travel across on the ferry every day?

Albrier: No, not every day, only when I wished to see the children.

Chall: Did you have a place to leave your children when they were young?

Albrier: Yes. I boarded the children with a friend of mine who took care of children.

Chall: When you had the job in San Francisco, you lived in with that family?

Albrier: I lived in. I came home only on weekends.

Chall: I see. So you really had to board the children.

Albrier: Yes. Then later, I started as a nurse, working with a doctor, Dr.--the other day, I wrote that doctors's name down, too--O. Roy Busch.

Chall: He was a white doctor?

Albrier: No. He was a black doctor. There were only two black doctors here at that time in Berkeley and Oakland. Dr. O. Roy Busch did all the maternity work for the black women. Those who didn't go to hospitals called for Dr. Busch. So he asked me to work with him and I did for a long time.

One of his cases was in a large home, and an apartment in the home was rented out to a young couple. They had a baby. Dr. Busch was the doctor and he always brought me in to help him with his babies. I told the young woman that I was getting tired of that work and I wanted to stop. I was getting tired, and not getting enough sleep, and I just felt worn and tired. I'd like to change. She said, "Why don't you go into Pullman service? They want someone who knows nursing, who knows how to take care of the sick. They're asking for somebody like that. I think you would like that. I'm going to tell Mr. Templeton about you and have him write you."

I said all right and didn't think much about it. But she did tell him and he sent for me for an interview. He said, "We think you would make a very valuable employee because there are a great many people who are sick and become ill on the trains. We would like you to think about coming into the Pullman service as a maid." I said all right and so I did.

A Maid with the Pullman Company, 1926-1931

Albrier: I went into the Pullman service. The only thing I had to learn was manicuring. One of the other maids got a beauty operator to teach me manicuring. That's what the maids did. They took care of the showers for the women who wanted showers and did the manicuring for both men and women. That's as far as they went in beauty work.

All of the train then was nothing but Pullman cars--the first class trains. In the women's restroom, no man was allowed in there. When the conductors came through, you had to walk through with the conductor so you could take the tickets from the women who were in the restrooms. That was part of your job. That was a very nice position. I call it position because I

Albrier: met so many fine people. During that time--they call it "running wild" that first year--I was in Chicago and a call came from Chicago that the maid was sick on the Twentieth Century and that I should take the Twentieth Century to New York. That's where I met Governor and Mrs. Franklin Roosevelt.

Chall: You mean you met them on the train?

Albrier: Yes, I met them on the train. They had a drawing room. That's why I say it was a position of wide experience because I met so many of these very fine people in the Pullman service.

Chall: This comes to me as a total surprise. [Chuckles] I haven't seen this in any of your material. You traveled from Oakland to wherever--what was your main route?

Albrier: The first year that I went into the Pullman service, you called it "running wild." That is, wherever there is a need for a maid, you were to go. On the Overland, It may have been the maid was sick and I would have to take her place. If I got into Chicago and there was an emergency for a maid on the Twentieth Century, I would have to go. In New York, when I got there, they needed the service of a maid who was off, or something happened--going somewhere else--I was to go. They called that "running wild." For a year; then afterwards, you bid in on a regular route if there's a vacancy. Then there became a vacancy on the Sunset Limited.

Chall: Where was that running?

Albrier: That was running from San Francisco to New Orleans. It was while I was on that run that I met Mr. Albrier.

Chall: That makes sense now, I see.

Albrier: That's how I got involved in railroading and the unions in railroading, organizing the maids and Pullman porters into unions.

[end tape 3, side 1; begin tape 3, side 2]

Chall: You said you went into Pullman service in 1926.

Albrier: 1926, yes.

Chall: And stayed until 1931.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Was there just one maid to a train?

Albrier: One maid to each train.

Chall: To each train. There were quite a few trains.

Albrier: Yes, seven trains a week. One a day, those top trains ran. To New Orleans, the personnel--from the maid and the dining car--ran through from San Francisco to New Orleans. The Pullman porters ran from San Francisco to Los Angeles; got off. Then in Los Angeles, they picked up the Pullman porters from New Orleans. The train did.

There were three trains out of here that carried the maid service, that was the Sunset Limited to New Orleans, and the Overland Limited to Chicago, and the Cascade Limited from San Francisco to Portland, Oregon.

Chall: And there was just one maid at a time?

Albrier: That's right. On each train, daily train.

Chall: So there were many porters--

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: And many waiters and cooks, and the one woman.

Albrier: One woman, yes.

Organizing the Pullman Car Porters and Maids

Chall: Did you get a feeling for how the porters felt about their employment conditions and their need to unionize? Did you back them?

Albrier: Yes. Most of the porters, except those who were scared of losing their jobs, backed A. Philip Randolph in organizing the Pullman porters, because they were getting very little pay and had to pay some of their funds out for personal services. Some of the porters were so militant about it, they ran into bad repute with the company. Some of them lost their homes because they lost their jobs. It took many years to do that. Then there were the dining car employees but they were a little different than the Pullman porters.

Chall: In what way?

Albrier: They had a trade--the cooks, waiters, and bartenders--you see, and they organized themselves. They came under the AFL then. But they were a different union; they were a railraod union and they were only men who worked for the railroad. Their union was a little different than the Pullman porters.

Chall: Did they have the same struggle organizing?

Albrier: They had a struggle organizing, but not as much as the Pullman porters. Of course, the Pullman Company fought very hard to keep the Pullman porters from being organized.

Chall: So the Pullman porters were employed by the Pullman even though they ran on the train?

Albrier: That's right. The Pullman cars ran on all of the railroads but the Pullman Company was a company all of its own.

Chall: I see--that's the difference.

Albrier: It was the Pullman Company that hired the maids. I was working under and being paid by the Pullman Company.

Chall: Were your working conditions like the porters?

Albrier: That's how I knew so much about the union, and met Mr. Randolph many, many times, and was in the battle in getting the Pullman Company organized. I was here when Mr. Dellums [C.L.] came here.

Chall: You were?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: He describes how difficult it was to organize the union: one, because the Pullman Company did everything it could to fire or--*

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*Interview with C.L. Dellums, International President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Civil Rights Leader, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley, 1973.

Albrier: Yes, they would fire and intimidate the men. Some of them were buying homes and had families, and couldn't afford it. It scared them. Some would slip in and pay their dues; some asked not to use their names, and all those kinds of things.

Chall: That's right.

Albrier: I paid my dues in New Orleans. I didn't pay it out of here because they couldn't see my name on a list. A lot of them did in other cities.

Chall: He said that sometimes he would go to people's houses to get the dues because he couldn't do it in the Pullman Company hiring office.

Albrier: Yes. In the Pullman Company, no.

Chall: Some of the men would pay him, and some of the wives would be very upset because they were afraid.

Albrier: To lose the job because at that time, the only job that a Negro man could get was railroading.

Chall: Did you ever go and ask the men or try to approach their wives to educate them about the need for the union? Did you do any of that sort of thing?

Albrier: No. We didn't have an auxiliary of the Pullman porters. We did, finally, have an auxiliary in the dining car union. When Mr. Randolph would come to the city and have a mass meeting, I would try to get the wives to come if their husbands couldn't come--to understand what he was trying to say and do for them, and the reasons. There was a need to become organized and it was a struggle; but they would benefit.

Some of those porters had eight to ten pairs of shoes they had to shine, and they had to furnish the material out of their own funds. Mr. Randolph brought all those things out--how they were exploited--in their work. A lot of the black women didn't understand the organization. They were frightened because that was the only kind of job their husbands could get. Naturally, they were frightened of losing the jobs because their families would suffer, and they didn't feel it was worth fighting and exposing themselves. Some of them were buying homes and were educating their children.

Chall: And there was the Depression as well.

Albrier: And there was a Depression coming on as well.

Chall: Did you try to organize other maids or were you so isolated that you never could be in touch with them?

Albrier: The maids joined the union with the brothers, the porters throughout the United States--South, East, and West--that was maids and Pullman porters on the Pullman cars.

Chall: Were there maids who did not sympathize with the union?

Albrier: There weren't many maids out here that sympathized with the union. They weren't brought up under that militancy and they didn't have the background that I had--going through school at Tuskegee and Howard. Our responsibility was trying to educate the black public and the black women on these things. They didn't understand economics; they only understood the need for the job.

Chall: You had a privileged job--no question about it. I guess any woman who had it would feel so--would feel that she had a privileged job, especially if she's also supporting a family.

Albrier: Yes. A great many maids in the East didn't support the union. They were too busy. Some did. Some gave contributions but they didn't join because they were afraid their names would be known if they had a card belonging to the union. They let the men do it.

Chall: So this is a rather long period when you had your children boarding.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: How close together in age were your children? You were married in 1922. Was the first one born about a year afterwards?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Then after that?

Albrier: Two years apart. Two girls and one boy.

Chall: About that time, then, you separated from Mr. Jackson.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: That was a reason why you didn't have more children. Did you plan your family in any way? Was there any kind of birth control information for women--black or white--in this area at the time?

Albrier: No, I didn't plan, but I did a lot of reading on it. Margaret Sanger was coming into the picture then. I read a great deal about her and what she said about birth control. Especially, I was interested in the other countries, like Africa, China, or in those countries where there's a huge population. I knew they were suffering--women were suffering--because of so many births and increase in population. I think that still stands good today.

Chall: There are many black women and men who resent the whole notion of birth control. They say it's genocide.

Albrier: Yes, they do that from a religious standpoint. Then, some people have rationalized that it's a good way to destroy a race of people. But I don't think so.

Chall: Did you, in the time you were giving advice to women through whatever organizations you were doing it--did you bring information about birth control to them or try to interest them in planned parenthood?

Albrier: Many times, I did. A great many times I was rejected because a great many of the black women were quite religious. Their religious teachings and ministers were against birth control.

Chall: Even the Baptist women?

Albrier: Yes. The Baptist and the Methodist women. It was just in later years that they have become educated to the real need.

Chall: What happened as you were working and not able to see your children very much? Did you feel that they were getting good family training? That they had a good home?

Albrier: Yes, I had a friend who took care of my children. She was just like a mother to them, and they loved her. They had a home background with her and her husband, so I didn't have that worry about them.

Chall: You were fortunate.

Albrier: My work was keeping up with them and providing for them. In fact, I gave up everything for my children.

Chall: At that time.

Albrier: Yes. And as time went on, too. Getting them through school, and seeing that they had the things they needed, and the education they needed, and the environment that they needed.

Chall: In 1931, you said you were laid off from the Pullman Company?

Albrier: Yes. That was at the beginning of the Depression and the company thought it was an extravagance, then, to have maids, so they laid the maids off.

Chall: That's when you then went into WPA?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: I'm not sure when the Pullman strike took place. Was that later? You weren't working for the Pullman Company, then, when they were on strike?

Albrier: No.

Chall: Were you a reader of the Messenger then?

Albrier: The Messenger, yes. I had a run-in with one of the Pullman officials and they tabbed me as being interested in the union. They weren't so sure, but they tabbed me from what I said. Whenever Mr. Randolph was coming out here, coming through, he would always have meetings. The Pullman Company would call a meeting on anything--traffic, instructions.

Chall: The Pullman Company would call a meeting of their employees so that they couldn't go and hear Randolph speaking, or so they could speak against a union?

Albrier: And so they could talk to them about the unionism and tell them what they wanted them to know. Instructor's meetings called safety meetings.

Chall: You had to be there?

Albrier: We had to be there at safety meetings. Then they would drill us and talk to us; then bring the union into it. They didn't see why we were wasting our money belonging to Philip Randolph's union. When we made so much money, we didn't need to be giving it away to a union--throwing it away on a union. And that the company was providing jobs and employment, and we owed so much to the company. This instructor said, "This Messenger. You shouldn't be reading this Messenger. It's nothing but trash. It should be relegated to the wastepaper basket."

Albrier: Mr. Randolph was out here and I had heard him speak on economics at the University of California. I said, without thinking, "You're wrong about that Messenger because Mr. Randolph, just the other day, spoke to the University of California students on economics. A man who is able to lecture at the University of California in Berkeley on economics, certainly wouldn't write trash."

Chall: Oh, my! [Laughs] You must have been pinned. They had your number right there. Were the men startled to hear this lone woman speaking up?

Albrier: No. Many of the men were proud. They said, "We're glad you spoke up. We couldn't afford to." "Well," I said, "I guess I'll lose my job, but I have a feeling we won't have jobs as maids long anyway. If I lose my job, I'll get another one."

Chall: You didn't have as much to lose--

Albrier: --as the men did.

Chall: That was still courageous of you. As you said, you really hadn't stopped to think that you were doing a courageous thing? You just did it?

Albrier: No, I just did it because I became angry with him for saying something like that. Then I became insulted that he should insult me, telling me something like that.

Chall: What was his response? Anything that you'd recall?

Albrier: He turned red as a beet and he said that he didn't mean it that way; not in that particular way. When it came to the Pullman Company and their employees, that it wasn't relevant to them at all. It was a different matter.

Marriage to Willie Albrier, 1934

Chall: You married Mr. Albrier in 1934. I assume you had been meeting him in New Orleans. Was he a porter who lived in New Orleans and got on the train in Los Angeles?

Albrier: Yes. He was a lounge club car porter who served drinks. He lived in New Orleans, but he was living out here at the time. He was born and reared in New Orleans in the French section. His mother was French. That's a French name. It's not Albrier; it's All-brē-ā. They say it right in New Orleans but out here they say it like it's spelled. I don't correct them. [Chuckles]

Chall: His mother was a white Frenchwoman?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: And his father was black?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: My, how could they live in the South?

Albrier: Oh, Louisiana is a state that's different from other states, you see. France once owned Louisiana, and a lot of those people who owned slaves were French. There are a great many people, even to this day, who have black complexions and speak nothing but French in Louisiana. They didn't have the feelings of discrimination as they did in some other states, and they intermarried. That's why they have the Creoles, the Indians, the French, the blacks--all mixed up.

Chall: That's right. They married among the Indians, too, in the early western settlements and in Canada.

Albrier: When I was on the Sunset Limited and ran into New Orleans, I was surprised that in cities like Baton Rouge, I met black people who couldn't speak English. Others I met--white and black--who spoke a dialect they called the Cajun.

Chall: You had quite an experience.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: So when you married Mr. Albrier, he was about your age? Or was he older than you?

Albrier: He was three years older than I.

Chall: What kind of education had he had? What sort of background?

Albrier: He had gone through high school and two years at Xavier College in New Orleans.

Chall: What did he do on the trains?

Albrier: He was supervisor and had charge of all the drinks in the lounge car. They had lounge cars--there was the bar in these cars.

Chall: So he had a responsible position?

Albrier: Yes, but he had a trade. His father was in the construction business. I often heard him talk about Mr. Gompers, who started the AFL. He had a trade as slate roofer. They don't have the slates out here, but in New Orleans they had large buildings, and all of them had slate roofs. That was his trade with his father. He had a half-sister who came out here, and her husband. He was a chef-cook and he influenced Mr. Albrier to come West.

Chall: What were their names?

Albrier: Swanigan.

Chall: Did they live in the Oakland-Berkeley area?

Albrier: They lived in East Oakland.

Chall: So you met him, then, on the train or here?

Albrier: I met him on the train.

Chall: Had he ever been married before?

Albrier: Yes. Once. His wife had passed.

Chall: Did he have children?

Albrier: One girl.

Chall: Was that--right from the start, and all through--a happy marriage?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Happier than your other one?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: I notice that in your scrapbook, from time to time, it indicates he would be at a meeting with you and speak up on something or other, whatever it might be.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: I noticed a letter that he had written to somebody at the same time you were working on a campaign. So he participated.

Albrier: Yes, yes, he did. He was very active in the union, too. He was very active in the organizing of the Dining Car Cooks and Waiters Union Local 456, AFL.

Chall: He was a strong union person. He had started out as a youth with the AFL.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: When you married, then, you decided to live here in Berkeley? You decided to stay here?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Did he have the same run from here to New Orleans and back?

Albrier: For a good while, he did. Then later, he ran on the Cascade to Portland and on the Overland to Chicago. Most every year, he took the University of California football team whenever they were going to play someplace. They would call and ask for him.

Chall: After you married, you moved here to this house, 1621 Oregon Street. What kind of neighborhood was it at that time?

Albrier: It was a mixed neighborhood. Japanese, Chinese, Italian, blacks, all in this neighborhood. An integrated neighborhood.

Chall: Some whites?

Albrier: Yes, some whites.

Chall: But primarily mixed sort of other races and ethnic groups?

Albrier: Yes. In fact, my children went to Longfellow School. My son was one of the escorts for our street traffic.

When one of the papers came to take their pictures, they said they never saw such an interracial bunch of youngsters, because they were all nationalities among those uniformed traffic boys.

Chall: Then you brought your family back to you and then you lived together as a family?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: What were you then, a housewife?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: It wasn't necessary then--

Albrier: Mr. Albrier was one of these old-fashioned men. They didn't believe in wives working. They thought they should stay home and take care of the homes and children. The responsibility was the husband's.

Chall: But I noticed in your scrapbook that there was a letter written to you in 1940. You were released [glancing at letter]--You had a letter from the California State Relief Administration on March the first, 1940, that "owing to drastic cuts in relief appropriations," they were cutting down their personnel and services. Were you working as a social worker with the California Relief Administration? That would have been in the [Culbert] Olson administration.

Albrier: Was that Olson or was it--

Chall: Well, it was 1940. Let's see, who was governor then?

Albrier: Olson, I think it was. [1938-1942]

Chall: I think so.

Albrier: Because he was the first Democratic governor for forty years. I helped elect him. That's the year we had all of them elected. "Olson, Downey, and Patterson" was the campaign song. [Ellis] Patterson was lieutenant governor and [Sheridan] Downey became Senator.

Chall: You don't recall, then, what you were doing with the California Relief Administration?

Albrier: No, I don't quite remember that. What was it talking about?

Chall: It was a letter that said that owing to a drastic cut in relief appropriations, they were going to have to cut out their services and personnel; so you were being terminated.

Albrier: Oh--that's when I was a caseworker.

Chall: I see, yes.

[Phone interruption]

Chall: I take it Mr. Albrier didn't mind your doing professional work, social work, like that.

Albrier: At times I did. That time was during the Depression. After the campaign, there were very few social workers employed. By my activities, politically, I knew that I could get on as a caseworker. I needed to get on as a caseworker because of so many complaints from the black people and the white people--from the mothers in the community who were on WPA and different projects. They claimed that they were not getting the things that they deserved, or the jobs they deserved, or getting on the projects they deserved; making the money that they deserved. So I became a caseworker.

The second year that Mr. Olson was in, the money ran out and they had to cut back personnel. That's what that letter was about.

Chall: Were you separated? Was there segregation in the welfare department?

Albrier: No. But there was discrimination in cases, in different cases. Some black women were never certified to some of the best projects that made more money.

Chall: So it was discrimination--

Albrier: There was a lot of it done through politics. I had worked very hard and run for political office on the central committee.

Chall: That's right. You were on the Alameda County Central Committee in 1938.

Albrier: I had access to a lot of files where I could find out things at that time.

The Effects of the Depression on Unifying the Community

Chall: After 1940, then, I guess you didn't work. What about the Depression? What did the black community do about its own unemployed? Jobs were hard to get and welfare was hard to obtain. Did you work again, as you did in the South, through the churches?

Albrier: During the Depression--I think that the Depression was one of the best years I've known. That sounds funny, but the Depression brought people together. If I wanted to have a community meeting, all I would do is send out a call that we're going to have a community meeting and we're going to talk about opening up certain projects for the black people. All of the community would come. We would meet with each other; converse with each other, and talk to each other. The same thing, sometimes, to get them together, we'd have a little party. Everybody would bring something to the party. We'd have a nice exchange of ideas and meeting people. We met neighbors we had never met before.

The Depression brought people together better than anything else that I know of. When the Depression was ending and the war came and people became employed, they were separated and you never saw them much after that. It was very hard to get them into meetings, and together again.

Chall: It brought about a unity, then, that you hadn't had before. Were these meetings in the churches that you called?

Albrier: We had meetings in the churches and the homes also. A great many of them were in homes and neighborhoods, and community buildings. A great many of them were neighborhood meetings. We'd have the meetings--especially political meetings, and meetings to inform people in the community--in the homes. Someone would give their house and have the meeting. The next time, we'd have a meeting in another block.

Chall: You were unifying not just the black people, but all the people in the neighborhood as well?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: It was still mixed?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Were you among what would be considered a few of the privileged black women who didn't have to work at that time?

Albrier: Yes. During the Depression, a great many of the railroad men were laid off, but Mr. Albrier was never laid off. He was still employed. They changed him. He had to run from Sacramento to Los Angeles. They gave him that type of run. But he was never laid off.

Chall: That was a privilege.

In terms of aid, like food baskets, clothing, and things of this kind, which I'm sure many people--unemployed--needed, was this done through the churches for your community?

Albrier: During the Depression years, the WPA years, they had these large sewing projects and they made clothing for people. They were issued out through the social workers, the social department. People would apply or request clothing, blankets, quilts, sheets, et cetera. If a mother needed two or three dresses for girls, ten or twelve, that requisition was sent in and they got those types of things.

Chall: So that helped.

Albrier: Yes. Excepting the Youth Conservation. There weren't many things to outfit boys who went on the NYA. I remember that when I was a caseworker. The only churches that had a program and a sewing room were the Catholic churches and the Seventh Day Adventists. They had clothing rooms for the needy. A youth came in needing a couple pairs of corduroys because he was going on an NYA project into the mountains. We'd send a call to either of those two churches and they would find the corduroys and outfit the youngster.

It was through that that I gave a call to the churches to have a storage room and a sewing room. Today, those churches still have that. I told them why--that we only had those two congregations that had that type of service and those were the only ones that we social workers and caseworkers could call on, when we didn't have enough money to outfit the youngster with clothing. When there was money available, we gave them a requisition to a store, but the money was depleted and we had to cut down. We had to go back to the communities.

It was then that I met any number of the churches and organizations. I told them that they needed to have a storage room for any kind of a catastrophe. If their members were making jelly, they should make a few extra glasses of jelly and bring it to the storage room. The missionaries do that. If they had a coat, and

Albrier: were tired of the coat, have it cleaned and take it to the storage room. Then they were prepared to supply these families who were in need of these articles.

Chall: Did you try to have a food bank, too?

Albrier: Yes.

Family Life and Church

Chall: What church did you join eventually, after you left--or did you leave the Nazarene Church after you were first married?

Albrier: After I married, I left the Nazarene Church--I didn't attend any church very much. Later, when I moved in this community, I attended the McGee--it was called Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church at that time. It's now McGee Avenue Baptist Church. I attended that through my children. My children liked to go there to Sunday school.

I had the old-fashioned idea like my grandmother had reared me--I thought that children should go to church, especially to Sunday school. I didn't bother them about the rest of the church services if they didn't want to attend. But I thought they should always attend Sunday school. All the children in this neighborhood went to Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church, now McGee Avenue, because it happened that most of them belonged there, or their friends did. So my children went there, too. Two of them were baptized there in that church.

Later, a minister left and the church kind of broke up, and they asked me to be secretary. I took the books and was secretary of the church for about two years or more. It was still Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church.

Chall: Did they pay you to be secretary?

Albrier: No.

Chall: It was just a volunteer position?

Albrier: Just a volunteer.

Chall: Did Mr. Albrier attend church? What were his feelings about church?

Albrier: Mr. Albrier was reared a Catholic. He deviated from Catholic teachings because I wasn't a Catholic. I think he was always a Catholic at heart, but he would enjoy all of the churches. He would go to the Protestant church, and if he felt like going and talking to the priest or going to the Catholic church, he would go to Mass. But he never tied down to any of them afterwards. He was a Mason; his father was a Mason.

Chall: That's interesting because I thought Catholics couldn't be Masons. [Chuckles]

Albrier: They don't. He asked his mother--his father was a Mason--and she gave her consent for him to join a Masonic lodge.

Chall: They took him in because his father was.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: So it was his mother who was the Catholic.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Did he have other relatives besides his half-sister who had moved out here?

Albrier: Other relatives?

Chall: Yes. Did he have other relatives--who stayed in New Orleans?

Albrier: His mother still lived when we married; she passed later. And two sisters. One sister is still living; the other one's passed.

Chall: Were they a close family? Did they try to get together very often even though they were separated by distance?

Albrier: They were very close while their mother lived. She would have them all come--they would all go to see her.

Chall: Was she an interesting woman?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Was she an educated woman?

Albrier: I don't know how much education she had. I think she'd gone through high school.

Chall: How was Mr. Albrier as a father of three pretty well-grown children when he took on the responsibility? Did the children like him?

Albrier: The children just adored Mr. Albrier, and he loved them. They just took to each other. He liked children, anyway.

Chall: It was fortunate.

Albrier: Yes. Well, I had my children very well trained. My son always wanted to have a dad--somebody he could call Dad--because all his friends had a father. So when Mr. Albrier came on the scene, he just immediately adopted him.

The Berkeley-Oakland Pattern of Discrimination

Chall: I see. Well, wasn't that fine? So there you were, a family, after all those years.

If this was an area that was not segregated and you didn't find much segregation in Berkeley, what about theaters if you wanted to go to a movie? Did blacks have to sit in any part of the theater?

Albrier: Not in California.

Chall: Not anywhere?

Albrier: Not that I know of.

Chall: So there really was no problem, as far as you knew, about being out in the community, being accepted?

Albrier: No. In public, you weren't discriminated--it was mostly in employment. But in public, you weren't discriminated in the theaters. You weren't discriminated in the church, or opera, or any of those places where you might go. Nor transportation--street cars or trains. California was like the northern states.

But there was discrimination--began to be discrimination in housing, if you were black. The youth, the children, felt discrimination in some of the schools with the teachers.

Chall: That would be coming along in the thirties then?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: I see. What about if you wanted to go to a local restaurant and have dinner? Any problems about going there?

Albrier: Yes. Yes. There was discrimination in some restaurants, in a great many of the restaurants. There was discrimination in the hotels. If they caught you by yourself, they told you politely that they didn't serve black people. If you were with another person, they'd tell you, "We'd appreciate it if you not be served because of this policy that we don't serve black people. We'll serve you this time."--if they felt you might sue.

I was very active in politics when Gus [Augustus] Hawkins was the first black assemblyman. Gus Hawkins authored a bill making it unlawful to discriminate against a person. If you did, you'd be fined no less than a hundred dollars. At that time, a hundred dollars was quite a bit of money. So, if you went to a restaurant and you were alone, then you had no witness that you were discriminated against. They just nicely told you they couldn't serve you--they were sorry. Or they let you sit there, and sit there, and sit there, and not serve you, until you'd get up and leave. A great many places made mistakes like that.

When there were two people together, and they would tell them that, then they would sue them and get the hundred dollars.

Chall: As soon as the law came in, a few blacks became militant enough to take advantage of that?

Albrier: A few of them did; especially some of the young people.

Chall: I don't remember when Augustus Hawkins came in, but it was when--around the early forties.*

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Before that, in the twenties, when you had first moved out here, was there discrimination in the hotels and restaurants then?

Albrier: I don't know because I didn't go to the hotels and the restaurants in the twenties. Mostly, I was home. I don't remember what my

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*Augustus Hawkins first term in the assembly was the 51st. session, 1935.

Albrier: father said about that. But I noticed all of the black people went to their own restaurants. They had one restaurant on Seventh Street. Seventh Street was a very popular street. There was a black restaurant down there where the black people always went to dinner when the wanted to go out.

Chall: That might be an indication of some segregation in eating.

Albrier: Yes. Now there was discrimination in housing because when I got this house, they didn't sell black people housing, only below Grove Street.

Chall: So that was really a change from what it was in the early twenties when you moved out here?

Albrier: Yes, that was a change because before then, they lived all over wherever they could afford to rent. A great many of them couldn't afford to rent in the most exclusive district because they didn't have the employment. And there were not many black families during the twenties and thirties.

Chall: This was then rapidly becoming--well, as you point out, it was a minority community.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: The Japanese and Chinese were certainly separated out too, until after the war.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Did you know Delilah Beasley, the author of The Negro Trail Blazers of California?* Could you tell me something about her and her work in Oakland?**

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*Delilah L. Beasley, The Negro Trail Blazers of California, Los Angeles, 1919. Reprinted by Rand E. Associates, through the courtesy of the California Historical Society and the San Francisco Negro Historical and Cultural Society, 1970.

**See answer on page 97.

MISS DELILAH L. BEASLEY

Miss Beasley was our pioneer in recording Black People's participation, along with other races and nationalities, in California History. She labored eight years in research and compiling her work, The Negro Trail Blazers of California, which is a reference book on California History.

I was fortunate to meet her in the Northern Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, The Women's Art and Industrial Club. I am thankful and grateful that I was fortunate to spend many delightful hours with her. At times she was ill and unable to write. I was one of the younger women she talked and communicated with about Black Women's Participation in History, and about compiling her book about Black People.

She was a wonderful inspiration. I have never known a more generous, kind, devout, talented, understanding, loyal, articulate, inspiring and compassionate person than Delilah Beasley.

Frances Albrier

[This was written by Mrs. Albrier in answer to the previous question inserted during the initial editing of the transcript.]

IV ACTIVITIES ON BEHALF OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITES FOR NEGROES

[Interview 4: December 14, 1977]
[begin tape 4, side 1]

Organizing Local 456: Dining Car Cooks, Waiters and Miscellaneous Help

Chall: Today we want to talk about your experiences in what I've labeled black employment issues. These all seem to have to do with the same thing, that is, finding ways of getting Negroes jobs when they were difficult to come by.

I thought I'd start with your work with the Ladies Auxiliary of Dining Car Workers. That really had to do with your husband's employment, but what else? What was the Auxiliary formed to do--that's the Local 456. Why were you so active in it?

Albrier: In the 1920s and the 1930s, there was not any employment for Negro men in the Bay Area, except on the railroads. The Southern Pacific in the twenties would bring to the Bay Area black families so that they could employ the men on the railroads. Some worked outside; some worked in machine shops; some worked in the engines department--cleaning the engines and taking care of them, and changing them from one track to another. Others worked on the trains as porters, cooks, and waiters.

The Southern Pacific brought many families--I don't know just how many, but many families came West at that time. The Southern Pacific brought them from places like Houston, Texas, where they had large shops, out West to work for the railroad. They were, as you know, like the Mexican people, cheap labor. Others were employed by the Pullman Company and railroads, which were Southern Pacific, Santa Fe, and the Western Pacific railroads, out of Oakland.

Albrier: For a great many years those men were not organized. It was during the 1930s--the latter part of the twenties and thirties--that attention was called to this large source of labor, unorganized and being exploited, by A. Philip Randolph in New York City who began to organize the Pullman porters. That was quite a battle. That was the first beginning of civil rights in labor for the black man throughout the country and it was quite a struggle.

Many of the men began to realize the idea of being organized and stop being exploited by the railroads; they went into the organization of the Sleeping Car Porters and became officers in the organization who were fighting to keep it going, because there were so many men who were agreeing with it, but were afraid, because they were intimidated and afraid of losing their jobs, which a great many did lose. Some of them, in losing their jobs, because they were buying homes, lost their homes.

In the meantime, the dining car workers began to think about their being in the same predicament as the Pullman porters and being exploited. In the cities, there were unions which were fighting for their rights, labor, and who were picketing--the chefs, the bartenders, waiters and waitresses--all were in an uproar at that time. In fact, the whole labor movement was going through a definite struggle for survival and organization. It was at that time they drew in the black workers of the railroads. Those were the largest groups of black workers in America--the railroads--not only the state of California here, but throughout the United States.

Chall: Did the AFL accept them into the union?

Albrier: The AFL did not accept them into the unions. In some unions, in some cities, I understand, there might have been two or three blacks, but they were not accepted in numbers. They were outside of the unions. Employers took advantage of it. Each side became hostile to the other. The black workers were hostile to the AFL because of their discrimination in the unions. The employer would say, "Well, I'd hire you; you're qualified, but I can't hire you because my employees come through the union. If you have a union card, then I will employ you." It was at that time that Local 456 was formed by Mr. Joe Easely and other railroad men.

Chall: This was a local black organization that had nothing to do with the AFL, is that it?

Albrier: No. They were Dining Car Cooks and Waiters, Local 456, AFL. They formed themselves into an organization and then, later, they became a union. Through hardship and struggle and battling with the AFL, they became initiated into the AFL as a union.

Chall: How did the AFL finally accept them?

Albrier: It was the only one--the only one--of the black unions in the West that was affiliated with AFL in these crafts. But they were a discriminatory union, because they were black and they were a railroad union. The AFL was beginning to take notice of the trouble at that time which the conductors and the workers in other departments of labor--white--were having with the railroads. It was to their advantage to organize the blacks also and to take them into the union, but not into their union, but as a separate union.

That's how Local 456 became involved. There was another local on the Union Pacific, I think it was 452. They were members of the AFL. The two--AFL and CIO--had not been united at that time.

Then the members began to work as a union and to encourage other railroad men to belong to the union. A great many of them disagreed about belonging to the union because a great number were being employed anyway, whether they belonged to the union or not. They asked why should they pay dues and not get any more advantages than they have? The union had to organize in the West and they organized in the East, and they had their own conventions to sort out their own problems. Usually their problems were a battle with AFL on things that they wanted.

In the meantime, Mr. Randolph had organized the Pullman porters. He was always a delegate to the national AFL organization. It was there he would tell of the plight and give the cause of black workers in America, especially on the railroads. The Pullman porters' union was the forefront of black workers in the unions.

In the meantime, after the Local 456 became organized, then they organized the Women's Auxiliary. Because unless they had the women behind the men--their wives interested in the labor and the grievances of labor, the men would become disappointed and discouraged. They had a message to give out to the public and to the people on unionism. In fact, they were the first pioneers in labor.

The Auxiliary and its Role

Chall: The Women's Auxiliary?

Albrier: The Women's Auxiliary.

Albrier: The National AFL chartered Local 456. They had a charter as the Railroad Cooks, Waiters, and Miscellaneous Help; it was a hotel workers union, also. They could take into their membership any person in those crafts. They were able to help many blacks who were not railroad people to be employed.

For instance, I remember a black woman. It was Kahns Store --it's now Liberty House--they changed the name of that store. It was called Kahns then. The woman applied at Kahns to be a cook in the cafeteria at lunch time. They advertised for such a cook. The manager was so pleased with her being such a cook and her capabilities, he told her that he would love to employ her, but she had to belong to the union, and to go to the union and see if she couldn't join the union. If she did, they would employ her. But the unions--the white unions--didn't take any black women as cooks or chefs. I met her downtown somewhere and she was telling me, and I said, "Oh, yes, you can become a union member. You go to Local 456 and join Local 456. They hold a charter for chefs and cooks." And she did. She joined and took her card back and she was employed. After that, a great many waitresses and chefs, second cooks, third cooks, and dishwashers in the City [San Francisco] belonged to Local 456, because Local 33 did not take blacks in their union.

In '38 or '39, the cooks, waiters, hotel workers, and miscellaneous workers began to admit blacks into their union. They called the blacks out of Local 456 because Local 456 was getting to be so large and having a large membership. There were members who really belonged to the other local because Local 456 and 452 were railroad unions.

So they went to the national that year and were told they could take these blacks in their union. So they recalled all the blacks who belonged to Local 456, who worked in the City across the bay in those crafts, into their union. But we would not let them go into the union until we were sure they would get all of the protection that other union members did. That was one of the struggles in the Bay Area in labor--between the black men. That was done through the help of the Women's Auxiliary being involved, and understanding the rules, and why labor was organizing, and why they would have the different activities, and why they would strike, and negotiation problems of labor. It was an education to all of us in those days because it was something that hadn't been done before.

Chall: So you were really a support group for the men who were in the union?

Albrier: I wasn't the first president, but I became, I think, the third person who was president of Local 456 Auxiliary of Dining Car Cooks and Waiters. I attended many of their national conventions, being president, and became involved in labor. In the meantime, the Depression was on and in the Bay Area was formed a Labor's Non-Partisan League.

Labor's Non-Partisan League: Getting Workers Into Politics

Chall: I want to know more about that. It was non-partisan and it was also interracial.

Albrier: Yes, it was interracial and non-partisan.

Chall: Non-partisan means that Democrats and Republicans--is that what they meant by non-partisan?

Albrier: Yes. Also labor, too.

Chall: I see. Not partisan as far as which union you were in.

Albrier: In crafts. That means all labor and all crafts.

Chall: What was the reason for that forming? The Labor's Non-Partisan League? What was its goal?

Albrier: That was formed to educate the masses of people in labor and to educate them in politics. The importance of voting, the importance of getting out the vote, the importance of getting persons in offices that favored your ideas, and your organization, and your predicament. People who were interested in labor and what they were fighting for. At that time, we were beginning to have President Roosevelt run for office. Both black and white labor favored Roosevelt, but they knew they had to organize and be able to draw on organizations in order to support a president like Roosevelt.

Also in state politics, there were people who had never thought of politics before. Some had voted and some hadn't voted. They had never given any thought of belonging to any organization that dealt in any form with politics, because they hadn't been interested. They were too busy earning a living and going about their own affairs. To get these people under an umbrella and be able to educate them and to give them literature is why the Labor's Non-Partisan League was formed--in order to reach the masses of people in the Bay Area.

Chall: I saw a letterhead of Labor's Non-Partisan League--I think it was only men, as I recall, except for Jennie Matyas--I noticed on the executive committee. Except for working closely with them when you wanted something done about black hiring, did you have any specific organizational contact with the league?

Albrier: The Labor's Non-Partisan League was organized in districts.* I then lived in the Seventeenth Assembly District. We've lost one of those districts due to population. At that time, I think that was in '39, I lived in the Seventeenth Assembly District and I served as the Seventeenth Assembly District's treasurer.

Chall: On the Non-Partisan League.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: That was as a result of your being a part of the auxiliary of Local 456?

Albrier: Yes, yes.

Chall: This had to be people concerned with labor?

Albrier: Yes. They would take in other members who were interested, also. Most of the people were employed at that time that we were reaching, doing something. Even housewives joined Labor's Non-Partisan League because they were employed in some form or another. Some were secretaries. Some were doing one thing or the other. The cooks in private homes, and maids in private homes, all joined the Labor's Non-Partisan League. They would come to the organizational meeting, community meetings, and they would join; no one was turned away.

Chall: As long as he worked.

Albrier: That's right.

Chall: That's an unusual concept.

Albrier: Yes. It was a matter of mass education of the people into politics and what it meant to them as people, especially people who were in labor and did all kinds of labor work. It was a bringing together of them.

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*The main headquarters listed on the letterhead was 1095 Market Street, San Francisco.

Chall: What were you doing in this?

Albrier: In the Labor's Non-Partisan League, those of us who were interested became precinct workers. We took a course in political science--those who hadn't had the course. We got an idea of what it meant to be a precinct worker. A great many of us became precinct workers. We became leaders in our communities or in our precincts. I was one who was in the precinct and did precinct work.

The East Bay Women's Welfare Club: Hiring Negro Teachers in Berkeley, 1938-1943*

Albrier: In the meantime, I had gone into politics on other issues besides Labor's Non-Partisan League. I became interested in the employment of black teachers in the Berkeley schools. I noticed there was no employment of black people in Berkeley schools, but that didn't come especially through labor. My attention was drawn out by black students--my children and other children who were going to school, who noted there wasn't a black teacher in the school. If faculty called them or they had a grievance, they had to go in front of the faculty, there wasn't a black face that they could turn to who understood them. They were expressing those ideas. That awakened me that that's right, we had no black teachers in Berkeley schools. We did have two in Oakland.

Chall: I see, two. One was Ida--

Albrier: Jackson.

Chall: Who was the other one? Do you remember her name?

Albrier: She came on later. Beth Wilson.

Chall: So they had a kind of token hiring in Oakland, but none at all in Berkeley. Did you consider that a token hiring in Oakland? Those two teachers?

Albrier: I don't know. I wasn't involved in their hiring in Oakland. When we became aware that we had nothing in Berkeley at that time, there were teachers in Oakland and we were aware we didn't have any representation. When students--my children and other children--were discussing this and were explaining it and telling me about it, I did research and found that we had no representation in the schools.

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*See Also Intruduction by Ruth Acty.



Dick Corten

The celebration of Miss Ida Jackson

"In her quiet but highly effective way, Miss Ida L. Jackson has been one of the most outstanding graduates the University of California at Berkeley has ever produced." These words were part of the moving tribute paid to Miss Jackson by out-going Alumni Association President Earl Willens '56 when he presented her with the California Alumni Citation last June at the annual Commencement Luncheon. A standing ovation followed the presentation.

For Miss Jackson, it was an astonishing contrast to her first days as a Cal student. "At the time, 1920, there were eight Negro women and nine Negro men enrolled on the Berkeley campus. One of the most difficult problems I faced was entering classes day after day, sitting beside students who acted as if my seat were unoccupied, showing no signs of recognition, never giving a smile or a nod." But even in those cold, early days here there were moments that kept Ida from being discouraged: "One day I had the privilege and great honor of being spoken to by and chatting with President Benjamin Ide Wheeler. I left inspired and figuratively walking on air."

Ida Jackson received her B.A. in 1922 and her M.A. the following year. Her thesis was entitled "The Development of Negro Children in Relation to Education," a topic she chose "primarily because I felt that factors other than inherited mentality affected the IQ of an individual. And at the time there was a widely accepted notion that the Negro's highest mental age was fifteen."

She went on to become the first black teacher in the Oakland public schools. Despite her advanced training (at Columbia University's Teachers' College) and broad experience (including a term as dean of women at Alabama's Tuskegee Institute) she remained a classroom teacher all of her 27 years with the Oakland schools. She recalls being told by one of her superintendents: "The time is not ripe for a Negro principal."

Ida Jackson, however, always took her work beyond her job. In the 1930s she founded a summer school for rural teachers in her native Mississippi ("I had the idea that if somehow the trained and educated Negroes could spend some time in the South, teaching the teachers of rural Negroes, they could in turn inspire the young Negro with the courage I felt he needed to improve his lot"). She went on to organize a traveling health clinic that brought medical care and education to plantation workers and their families. When Eleanor Roosevelt learned of these projects, she invited Miss Jackson to the White House and praised her work.

Now retired, Miss Jackson still maintains close ties to Berkeley, which in 1970 bestowed upon her the Berkeley Citation. She remembers how essential the moral support, encouragement, and guidance provided by her professors and deans were to her success as a student, and she performs a similar service for many of today's undergraduates. She regularly spends days in California Hall informally counseling students, sharing her experiences, offering whatever guidance she can and, sometimes, "a few dollars that make the difference."

"A great many of us have been aware of the shortcomings of society, its injustices, and have tried all our lives to change, ameliorate, and correct them. I am more than ever convinced that education is the greatest factor in the upward climb of any person or people," states Ida Jackson.

"The University of California has done for thousands what it has done for me: it has enabled me to realize the vast avenues of learning and culture to be explored, and strengthened a desire to try, and in the exploration to take others along on the journey."

California Monthly, Feb. 1977 p. 4

Albrier: Through my education, and the Labor's Non-Partisan League, and in politics, I formed the East Bay Women's Welfare Club of mothers. We had a small Mothers Club. But we weren't organized; it was just a little Mothers Club to get together. Then I found out that we needed an organization to express ourselves and our grievances in the community.

This Mothers Club did some research into how many taxpayers were in Berkeley; how many black people were taxpayers. We found out that then there was discrimination. Most black people lived below Grove Street. A few lived above Telegraph--they were old-timers. Most of them who came into the city would buy homes below Grove Street, between University and Alcatraz. So we sent out a committee to do some research to find out how many people living in Berkeley were taxpayers, and we found out that in this area there were 5,000 taxpayers in the city of Berkeley.

Then we came to the information that we had no representation --those taxpayers had no representation in the city government. We had no teachers in the schools, we didn't even have a janitor or a clerk. We didn't have a recreation leader in the parks. We didn't have anything. So that was the beginning of the East Bay Women's Welfare Club.

Chall: How did you gather these women together? I mean, did you pick the women you thought would be helpful to you or did you just call a large group together by issuing an announcement?

Albrier: I knew them because a great many of them I met in church, and a great many of them I met in the Northern Federation--it's Association now--Association of Colored Women's Clubs. But in northern California was a Northern Federation of Colored Women's Clubs. Many of them were members of the Northern Federation of Colored Women's Clubs. They were club women and in the auxiliary [Local 456].

Chall: You had gotten around a bit, so you knew quite a few women who could be organized to help you achieve your goal.

Candidate for the Berkeley City Council, 1939

Albrier: Yes. Then I involved my pastor, who was the pastor, Reverend Arthur Johnson of the St. Paul Methodist Church in Oakland. I talked to him as a member on these ideas we had and what we were thinking about. And I talked to Attorney George Vaughns. There was one more, Robert Johnson. They said, "Why don't you run for council--for the city council? If you want to do these things, why not run for city council so that you can tell everybody that we are paying all these taxes without representation?" So they became my committee. I filed for city council.

Chall: I don't have my notes with me, but I'm assuming that you filed and ran for city council before you managed to get Miss [Ruth] Acty into the schools?

Albrier: That's way after that.

Chall: If we can then, I'd like to stay with this whole matter of getting Miss Acty hired as a teacher.

Albrier: I'm bringing it down point by point.

Chall: I see, Miss Acty came afterwards then. Okay, I just wanted to get it in chronological order. First they suggested that you run for city council. That would be your best way to get representation.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: So you ran.

Albrier: So I ran--I filed and ran for city council, which was very unusual for a woman to do. [Chuckles]

Chall: A black woman at that. [Laughs]

Albrier: We women hadn't become very active in politics. They knew something about it, but they weren't active in running for offices. But I knew that I didn't file or run to be elected--I didn't think I would be elected, because I didn't think that people were broad-minded enough to elect a black woman. But I was in for a surprise. I received a great many votes. My idea of running was to meet the people. I knew that if I ran for city council, I would be invited to the clubs and organizations to give my views on the city government. I wanted to tell them that we had 5,000 taxpayers without any representation in the city government or the schools of Berkeley. That was the message I wanted to get over to them because later we had planned to make an issue.

Chall: So you were taking this, then, just step by step for the educational phase?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: You ran a campaign, though, with leaflets and precinct walkers--the usual bit, is that it?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Three men in charge.

Albrier: Yes. There were four men, but I can't think of the other name. I'll have to look it up in my notes.

Chall: Did you raise some money among your friends to print the material?

Albrier: Yes. This committee raised some money and got out leaflets and data in it. I met with the black organizations, and they were very excited that a black person was running for city council. [Chuckles]

Chall: How about your family? Your husband and your children were back of you?

Albrier: In the meantime, when I ran for city council, Labor's Non-Partisan League didn't agree. Some of the members didn't agree. They thought that I shouldn't run because they had a candidate who was running from Labor's Non-Partisan League in this district--Brownlee Sherik. He was a laundry wagon driver, a union member. They thought that the people in Berkeley would not vote for me because I was black and that he would have a better chance and they would get their candidate elected. They sent a committee to ask me to withdraw, and I would not withdraw. Mr. Albrier stood back of me that I should not withdraw because I had a different type of issue--the reason why I was running.

After the election, the East Bay Women's Welfare Club and I met and decided what our next project should be on getting our teachers in the schools. When, after the election, we decided to meet with the board of education and to tell them that we were decided, they were very well aware of it because we had made that a subject in the campaign. So we decided to meet with the board of education, and to meet with the board of education until we got the meeting out into the public.

In the meantime, Walter Gordon, who was very prominent in Berkeley city affairs, thought that it should not be brought out into the public, that the board of education should not make it a

Albrier: public issue--that we should meet with the board itself. Anyway, we met with the board about four or five times and thrashed out all kinds of issues.

The first thing we had to do was to get the girls to apply, because any mumber of them said they had applied and were turned down. They knew that their application was thrown, when they left, in the wastepaper basket. We told them, "You apply anyway. We can't fight for teachers in the schools unless you apply and you have applications in there." So five applied. I think those five are in my scrapbook.

Chall: Yes, they are and the questionnaire they filled out about their backgrounds and their treatment as applicants.

Albrier: Dr. Louise Hector was the chairman of the board of education and was quite understanding of our problem. She approved of what we were doing, herself. She felt that not only should black teachers be in school, but other races, teachers, should be in the schools and that we would have to come to that someday. It was just her thoughts herself. We had a good ally with her on our problems. We met four or five times with the board of education and had all kinds of confrontations [laughter] with the members.

Chall: Was that in public?

Albrier: No, that was in their own meeting. That was in closed meetings.

Chall: You would go, a small committee of you, and talk to them?

ALbrier: Yes, and then we finally--Walter Gordon had told Dr. Hector that he didn't think we should make it a public issue and go out into the public about teachers in the schools. He thought that we should iron it out with the board. But the last meeting that we had, we demanded that we make a public issue out of it. We had these five girls who had applied--two of them that they thought very well of as being teachers; one of them was Ruth Acty and the other was Mary Labuzan. Both of those girls had done some teaching. Mary Labuzan was teaching part-time in San Francisco. Ruth Acty had taught in the Valley in schools.

First Teacher employed in Berkeley Kindergarden
Report on Eligible Candidates for teaching Position

1. Ruth Acty 1629 W. 14 St Oakland
Now teaching in Southern Cal.

Questions	Answers
1. Are you willing for the Eastbay Negro Women's Welfare League to intercede for you in your attempt to procure appointment in the Oakland public schools?	1. yes
2. What California certificate do you hold?	2. General Elementary, Junior High, Kindergarten
3. Have you applied for a position with the Oakland Board of Education	3. yes
4. What paid experience have you had?	4. Few days substitute work
5. What was reason given by Board of Educ. for not placing you	6. none

Achieving the Policy of Non-Discrimination in Hiring

Albrier: Then a date was set when we would bring this issue out in a public meeting. It was brought out in the public meeting and everybody talked. It was in the papers.* People came up and talked for these teachers and others didn't know why they didn't have the teachers. At that time, we elected the superintendent of schools --he was elected by the people. They've changed that now, but he was elected by the people of Berkeley, the voters of Berkeley. The superintendent was very well aware of that. When the question came up, when he had recommended eighteen teachers to teach in the schools the next coming year, the question was asked if any of them were Negro girls. He said no. They asked why. He said to them, "I have been given no kind of authority to recommend teachers to teach in Berkeley schools, other than Caucasians." Then the board became quite upset because they weren't aware; they hadn't thought of that. Then Dr. Hector said, "Well, that means we have to set a policy and we'll have to hand down a policy for teachers to teach in Berkeley schools. We'll do that by the next meeting. We'll have two weeks and the board will be meeting to hand down this policy."

Chall: I couldn't figure out why they needed a policy for hiring anybody.

Albrier: Well, they did at that time.

Chall: I see.

Albrier: Then it came out in the papers. The papers got to this meeting and found out when the board was going to meet to set this policy for black teachers to teach in Berkeley schools. It was so widespread, so much talk about it, the board room was full in the Berkeley auditorium. There were people from Oakland, retired teachers, everybody came to hear this policy. I met some retired teachers and they said they just came to hear. They hadn't made any decisions of their own, but they just wanted to hear.

Dr. Hector got up and said, after certain business and procedures were taken care of, "Now, we will read to you the policy to be handed down to the future boards of the city of

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*See Berkeley Gazette and Oakland Tribune, September 21, 1939.

WE THE UNDERSIGNED PLEDGE OURSELVES TO SUPPORT THE EAST BAY WOMEN'S CLUB, IN THEIR EFFORTS TO SECURE EQUAL RIGHTS FOR THE NEGRO CITIZENS.

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ladies who served on Committee to the Board of Education [illegible] who interviewed Mrs. Louise Keating [illegible] Board of Education.		
Mrs. Sarah Gray		
Mrs. [illegible] Brown		
Mrs. Annie Williams		
Mrs. Brooks.		
Ladies written to the Board of Education for appointment interviewed them Mrs. Gerta Beachmans.		
Ist Committee		
Mrs. Gerta Beachmans Spokesman		
Mrs. Frances Albin Chairman 2nd Spokesman		
Mrs. Minnie Spence		
Mrs. Marie Williams		
Mrs. Annie Richardson		
[illegible]		

2nd Committee.

Mrs. Frances Albrier Spokesman.

Rev. Arthur Johnson - Pastor Park Chapel.

Mrs. Marie Williams

Mrs. Electa Beasley.

[illegible] Clubs who sent their names

Mrs. Lillian Dixon Chairman Legislature

Committee of the Colored Women Federated Clubs.

Who is a Member of the East Bay Women Welfare

Club.

Mrs. Berdigma Pres. of Berkeley Council Study

Club.

The Clubs Committee and Friends Contacted

Signed in a Resolution which was filed

with the Board of education for a equal [illegible]

of employment in the Berkeley High Schools and

its Departments. Teachers, Stenographers, Clerks

Janitors Cafeteria workers, Recreation leaders on

play grounds.

Albrier: Berkeley on the appointment of teachers in the Berkeley schools. This board has concurred that we will be guided by the fourteenth and the fifteenth amendments of the Constitution of the United States of America. That teachers will be recommended to teach in Berkeley schools regardless of race, creed, or color--on merit."

Chall: That was a signal victory for all of you. I want to go back to what it was like when you were having, as you say, four or five meetings in private with the board--your committee. What could they say to you about not hiring a black teacher--in private, I mean. In private, they might say something different from what they were going to say in public. You were trying this quiet, cautious approach that Walter Gordon wanted to try. For what point? Did you win anything by taking this approach?

Albrier: We were asked all kinds of questions. One of the board members was a Mason. One of the women who belonged to the East Bay Women's Welfare Club challenged him because he was a Mason, and she told him he should pull off this Masonic emblem--if he didn't think the time was right that we should employ black teachers in the schools and that black teachers should teach white children. A great exchange of ideas and sentiments between the members and the board went on behind those closed doors.

Chall: Were they prejudiced? Dr. Hector wasn't, and I guess Walter Steilberg would appear not to have been. One of the men seemed--

Albrier: I think there's a letter in the scrapbook from Dr. Steilberg afterwards.

Issues: Radicals; Opposition Among Blacks and Whites

Chall: A lovely, fine letter. There was a man named Mr. Ziegler, who was rather opposed, quite opposed. He seemed to feel that hiring blacks would just encourage some of the--I guess radical groups, who took it up as a cause.

Albrier: In the meantime, during that, the radical groups were organizing throughout the Bay Area in everything--for employment. They would have mass meetings. Then they would have fights. A great many people would be arrested. And all that publicity that they were having in the neighborhoods. It was the beginning of a new era and a new school of thought, but it was brought about in the communities by the radical element. They were among all of the people. They were among the Negro people. They were agitating them on certain things and they were becoming very bitter about conditions.

WALTER T. STEILBERG
CONSULTING ARCHITECT
85 SECOND STREET, SAN FRANCISCO
GARFIELD 3461

September 25, 1939

Mrs. Frances Albrier
1621 Oregon Street
Berkeley, California

Dear Mrs. Albrier:

The first draft of the resolution respecting the employment of non-Caucasions in the Berkeley School Department has been submitted to the other members of the Board and to our executive officers for review and criticism. This motion will be made at the next meeting of the Board, Wednesday evening, September 27th and I have reasons to hope that it will be carried and that your group will be satisfied with the policy which the Board will then establish.

With the purpose of advancing your own interests, I wish to ask you and your group to weigh most carefully the following considerations: (1) Racial tolerance is a noble ideal, but racial prejudice is a hard fact. Your Board of Education is obliged to deal with this fact; however unreasonable and unfair their prejudices may be, some of our most able and public spirited citizens still cherish the illusion of Nordic superiority. Those of us in public office who are sympathetic to your cause and believe literally in the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution, cannot ignore the views of those who think otherwise. In my opinion, these strange prejudices are mainly due to tradition or to insufficient experience with different races in different degrees of advancement. Whatever the cause of racial prejudice, I am sure that the interests of your group and of similar groups will be best served if you can avoid the rousing of your own hatred by such evidences of intolerance as may come to your attention.

(2) Personal denunciations of a man in public office whose opinions are not favorable to your interests will not in the long run advance your cause. In the four years that I have served on the School Board with Mr. C. L. Zeigler, I have always found him a very generous and fair minded man. I am quite convinced that in this matter he is as much concerned as I am with what he believes to be your best interest. His fear is that your group is simply being used to further the ends of some subversive political agitators and that the appointment of a non-Caucasian to our teaching staff would just mark another advance for the so-called radicals. Of course I do not agree with Mr. Zeigler at all in this matter but his entirely honest opinion deserves my respectful consideration,- and yours.

(3) A good deal has been said about your group being a pressure group. I regret that delayed action on the part of the School Board and administration may have warranted the development of some pressure on your part, but I hope for your own sake that it will not be increased or even continued until the Board has had opportunity to act. A man in public office is subject to a great many little irritations and the use of such words as "demand" and "insist" are very likely to antagonize him.

I offer these suggestions only in the hope that they may be helpful in the solution of a difficult and delicate problem that is of the most grave concern, not only to those of your race but to every American.

Yours truly,

Walter T. Steilberg

WTS:W

Chall: The Negroes were.

Albrier: And some of the whites. We had some whites who were coming into the Bay Area the same as we had not long ago. You know, the university, when we had the riots, when there was so much agitation among the students.

Chall: They were deliberately then, you think, fomenting the problems?

Albrier: Yes. Yes. That's why we had to work and be very careful.

Chall: By the time you'd had your several meetings, though, it would seem that Mr. Ziegler would have understood that this was a moderate group of blacks who were simply asking to have teachers hired and that you were not part of that radical group. But he was still willing to use that as an excuse for not hiring blacks?

Albrier: He or Mr. Steilberg did not want the radical bunch to come in and take over the educational system in Berkeley. They thought they might use this issue to do so. They didn't know how strong we were to force them back. We organized and would not let them in our meetings. Our meetings were open to our own membership and we would not let them in our meetings or control our meetings. That's how we had such a peaceful kind of meeting. Afterwards, the radicals came in and took over a lot of the sentiment of the community.

Chall: It's obvious that blacks were wanting to be hired and it wouldn't be hard to make that an issue.

Albrier: But that issue prevailed and that's why it took us five years to get the first black teacher.

Chall: It took that long?

Albrier: Yes. Five years from that time that we met with the board of education and they handed down that decision.

Chall: It took five years to do that?

Albrier: It took five years. We kept after that for five years. Every year, the members of the East Bay Women's Welfare Club would say, "Have you heard from Dr. Dickson?" (who was the superintendent of schools) "on the teacher, the black teacher in Berkeley schools? We don't want to drop it. We want to keep after it." Every year, Dr. Dickson would tell me that he was working on it. I found out that there were some blacks in the community who opposed black teachers.

Chall: I was going to ask you about that. There was opposition?

Albrier: Yes. They felt that they were not qualified and they hadn't trained them enough to be qualified along with the whites. They preferred, instead of having black teachers in the schools, they preferred having black schools with black teachers. That was that type of element that had come from the South, who had been used to that and would like to see that out here.

Chall: They really believed in the segregated schools?

Albrier: They would hire their own teachers. Then Dr. Dickson had to contend with the whites who did not want black teachers in the schools. So it took him quite a while to iron that out and to gradually do it and to educate the people.

[end tape 4, side 1; begin tape 4, side 2]

Chall: Dr. Dickson, as a result of all this controversy, was really in the middle of it, wasn't he?

Albrier: Yes, he was in the middle of it. He didn't want to create a lot of confusion. So the third year, he said to me, "We're going to get that first black teacher, Mrs. Albrier. Just have faith. If you and your women will just have faith in me. It takes time, but when we do get her, she'll be permanent and she'll be followed by other black teachers. Now, I'll have to arrange a school for that first black teacher to teach in. I have to arrange the faculty because if she comes into a hostile faculty, it will be very hard on her. A great deal of work will have to be put on that first black teacher. She will come under quite a bit of pressure, but we want to make it as easy for her as possible." I said, "All right. We're still waiting patiently."

Then he told me and he told me not to say anything to the women what school--but he told me he was arranging Longfellow School. I was working very close with Longfellow School at that time.

Success at Last: Ruth Acty is Placed in Longfellow School

Albrier: I belonged to the PTA. I knew the teachers in the school and I knew the principal. He said, "I'm removing a principal and do you notice I have another principal in Longfellow School?" I said, "Yes, I noticed that." He said, "I'm removing some teachers and bringing in some other teachers. That will be the school that will receive that first teacher."

Later, at the end of the fifth year, he called and said, "You're going to get your first teacher, black teacher, in the school--Longfellow School." I said, "Who?" He said, "Ruth Acty." I said, "What classes is she going to teach?" He said, "Kindergarten." I said, "Why the kindergarten?" He said, "Mrs. Albrier, little children don't have prejudices. If their first teacher in kindergarten is a black teacher, you don't have to worry about who they meet if there's a black teacher in the sixth grade."

Chall: Miss Acty told me she thinks one of the reasons that they put her into kindergarten was because kindergarten was not a requirement in the school district at that time. If white parents objected to having their children in the class with her, they could remove them.

Albrier: That might have been, also. But he gave me that reason when I questioned him.

Chall: His reasoning was good, too, from that point of view. That's fair. Your children attended Longfellow School. What was the percentage there of black children at the time, that you recall?

Albrier: About fifty percent.

Chall: Now, let me ask you about the five years. Did it take five years to get Miss Acty into her position from the time that the school board made its policy?

Albrier: That's right.

Chall: I see. So getting the policy made took you what, a couple of years, or one year until you got it up the point where they set up the policy?

Albrier: It took us about seven or eight months.

Chall: I see--close to a year of confrontation.

Albrier: We had the policy made after I ran for city council.

Chall: They were prepared for that.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Then it took five years--

Albrier: It took five years to get the first teacher.

Chall: The East Bay Women's Welfare Club--that was set up almost specifically to take care of this school issue. Was that one of your main issues?

Albrier: That was one of the main issues, because most of the members at that time lived in Berkeley. They owned homes in Berkeley and their children were going to school in Berkeley.

Chall: After you finally succeeded at the end of five years, did it disband so that you'd go on to some other cause?

Albrier: It disbanded after that.

Chall: I notice from your scrapbook that you often set up, or it seems to me--I have to ask you whether it was true--but it seemed to me that you would set up a specific group to accomplish a specific purpose. After that purpose had been accomplished, then you would set up another group. [Laughs]

Albrier: Usually they became disinterested.

Chall: Yes, they were sort of what they now call ad hoc committees.

Albrier: I couldn't get their ear. As issues came about, they would band together again on that particular issue.

Chall: Whatever it was.

Albrier: At that time, yes.

Chall: Can you tell me about some of the women who were in this? Who was Amelia Swanigan, who was the treasurer of the club--the East Bay Women's Welfare Club?

Albrier: Amelia Swanigan was Mr. Albrier's half-sister.

Chall: She was the one who was living in East Oakland?

Albrier: Yes. Her husband was one of the oldest chefs when he retired that the Southern Pacific had. He retired with fifty years service.

Chall: Who was Ivah Gray, who was your membership director?

Albrier: Ivah Gray was one of the very active clubwomen in those days.

Chall: She came out of the Colored Women's Federation.

Albrier: Yes, she belonged to that.

Chall: And Estelle Abrams? She was your secretary.

Albrier: Yes, she was very active in club work and church work.

Chall: There were women who, according to your scrapbook, went with you to interview Dr. Hector. I guess probably to present the problem to her the first time.

Albrier: Yes. One of the meetings.

Chall: In addition to Ivah Gray, there were Dorothy Brown, Marie Williams, and Mrs. Brook.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Were they also mothers and active club women?

Albrier: Yes, Marie Williams. She's Wingfield now. And Mrs. Brooks--all of them were women in the community, in the Berkeley community, who were active in various organizations.

Chall: Did you pick these women because they were articulate and could explain what it was you were concerned about?

Albrier: They were concerned and interested in community work. They were interested in the field of civil rights because at that time the California Negro was fighting for dignity and equality, and trying to advance the cause of civil rights. People who were interested in it automatically, at that time, joined organizations that were fighting on issues.

Chall: What about Electa Beachman? She wrote the letter, you claimed, asking for the interview. She was spokesman for the committee.

Albrier: She was a businesswoman, a real estate woman.

Chall: Then Fannie Speece?

Albrier: Yes. All those are deceased now.

Community Support

Chall: Did the NAACP back you in this at that time?

Albrier: No, we didn't take it to NAACP. We did it on our own.

Chall: Did they support you?

Albrier: It was a Berkeley affair, Berkeley people, Berkeley taxpayers. Many citizens, black and white, supported us throughout the Bay Area through their presence at meetings and expressions of agreeing with us. We knew we had the backing if we needed the NAACP; almost all the members belonged to NAACP. They took this as an issue all their own. The NAACP was ready to help us if we needed them but this issue was a community one.

Chall: At that major meeting on September 20, 1939 that got all the publicity in the newspaper, there was a woman named Mrs. H. E. Newman from Piedmont Lakeside Study Group, who spoke. How did she get in there? Was she a black woman?

Albrier: She came out to the meeting. People all over the audience spoke.

Chall: You didn't bring her in?

Albrier: No. We didn't bring her in, but she gave her sentiments as <u>for</u> the black teachers in the schools. Although she lived in Piedmont, she wanted to know what was she paying all those taxes for on property she owned. She owned a lot of property in Berkeley and paid quite an amount of taxes. She expressed the idea she was <u>not</u> paying taxes on discrimination of teachers.

Chall: You must have been surprised at someone like that coming to you.

Albrier: Yes, we were. They read it in the papers and came to the meeting; many were clubwomen.

Chall: Then I noticed you had support from E. A. Daly, who was a publisher--

Albrier: The publisher of the <u>California Voice</u>.

Chall: He was the publisher of the <u>Voice</u>. Now, he came on his own, too, or had you asked for his support?

Albrier: No, all of those people came to that open meeting themselves.

Chall: And who was Mrs. M. Wysinger?

Albrier: Mrs. Wysinger then wrote the column, "The Negro in the News," in the Oakland Tribune at that time.

Chall: I notice your husband also spoke that night. He didn't always get out and speak that way for causes, I guess, but he--

Albrier: [Laughs] No.

Chall: --probably was home that night. Aside from Walter Gordon, who wanted it to be quiet, and the Southern blacks whom you felt preferred to have their own schools with their own teachers, were there prominent blacks in the community like the doctors or other professionals, who felt the same way as Walter Gordon?

Albrier: Walter Gordon didn't feel that way. Walter Gordon was afraid. I think he had the fear that the radicals would come in and control, but he didn't realize that I knew them quite well, by working with labor. Seventh Street--that was where they were picketing stores, people having fights, people getting arrested, and having all that notoriety at that time. I think that's what they wanted to do, because they got in the limelight that way. He was afraid that they would come in and use our project. The idea of the black teachers teaching in the schools, he was always agreed on that. He felt that maybe we were too impatient and this wasn't quite the time to do that. After we got along so well, he agreed with us and he okayed the moves of Dr. Louise Hector and the other moves--every one that they made.

Chall: The only major meeting that you had which was sort of like a confrontation meeting, if you want to call it that--the press wanted to call it that--was that one of September 20. But then two weeks later, you got your policy established. I guess one has to wonder sometimes, at what point you take it to the public and really get a feel for--let the board feel the confrontation, or the issues.

Albrier: I would like to say that we had a great deal of help, too, from the young people in those days. They backed our organization, our group. My youngsters in the school, the board's youngsters, all of them who were going to school, were quite a bit of help. If we wanted to get out leaflets or anything like that, they did it. I think their help was very essential to us in getting the policy set.

Chall: So it was really a major issue fomenting all over Berkeley at the time?

Albrier: Yes. Because they would talk to some of their teachers in the schools. Some of their teachers felt they couldn't come out and agree or disagree, because they were teachers in Berkeley schools. People were kind of afraid to speak out on things in those days.

It was just the beginning of a revolution, where people were beginning to feel that they should speak out and be free to speak out. I think maybe the radical group should be given that kind of consideration because they helped bring that out among a great many people who were quiet, who would say that in closed living rooms but were timid about going into public and lending the public their voices. A great many of them found their voices in those days, like the lady who came from Piedmont and said what she did.

The Concern with Takeover by Radicals

Chall: Was it a problem to you to keep your meetings closed and out of the control of radicals?

Albrier: Yes, it was a problem because I understood why and the officers of the club understood why, but a lot of the members didn't. I know one time they had a meeting here, and they invited one of the radicals to come to this meeting. "Mrs. Albrier and the others are going to have a meeting about those teachers at her house Friday night." And they came. We did not say very much or have much business that night while they were there.

Afterwards, we were informed when they came in; we would just close the meeting or get on some other issue and not have our regular meeting--in order to keep them out, so they couldn't organize to take over. Because they would come in and take over your meeting. We knew very well who they were.

Chall: Those must have been tense days for you. You must have been planning and plotting almost every day. [Laughter] It's like warfare, in a sense, without the bullets.

Albrier: I could see what was going on in the neighborhoods. By me being in the Auxiliary of the dining car employees, I received all kinds of information from the women. The women had never come out in the open and expressed themselves. They knew very little about organization. It was taboo for women to get up and express themselves. I knew what was going on in our neighborhood. I knew that these radicals were here and they were taking over the labor movement. They were inciting animosity between black labor and

Albrier: white labor. They were posing as being great friends of the black man, but behind that, it was their movement that they were interested in more than the black. They were meeting in the homes of black women and those homes were being destroyed.

Chall: Did they burn them or--

Albrier: No. They would tell them, 'We are your friends and we don't believe in discrimination. We believe that if a white woman wants to have a black man as a friend, she should." They had white women in their movement who would court the friendship of black men. They would do anything that would help their movement. We knew that. We knew what was going on.

That's why we were cautious and we had women who were stalwarts, who would stand their ground, in order to put over what we wanted to put over. They tried very hard to take over our fight for black teachers in the schools, so they could get a lot of publicity. By us being aware of those things....Many of the other people then who were close to them and who'd observed them, warned us. They were not able to take over the women's group.

Chall: That was not only this group, but all of your women's groups, the Colored Women's Federation and the rest of them, they didn't get into them?

Albrier: That's right.

"Don't Buy Where You Can't Work," 1940, 1955

Chall: That was an exciting period, to say the least. It's interesting. So you really did that on your own. Then, can you tell me about 1940, when you began to picket the Sacramento Market in order to get Mr. King to hire back, or hire any Negro employees. That was in March 1940.

Albrier: Was that date in the scrapbook?

Chall: Yes.

Albrier: Because I forget.

Chall: You were then the president, according to a letter you had written --you weren't the first president--but you were at that time the president of the Citizens Employment Council, which was set up, I guess, again, just to accomplish one purpose.

Albrier: That time, we had--it was during the Depression years--a great deal of unemployment among the black people. It was prevalent all over. In Chicago, there had been a movement--when I was in the Pullman service and ran to Chicago--that put on a campaign. The movement was sponsored by the Chicago Whip, a weekly newspaper, in 1930. Their slogan was "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work."

Chall: Yes.

Albrier: I was in the Pullman service at that time. The maids' quarters were on the South Side. I wanted to go to Woolworths to get some manicuring material. As I went into Woolworths, I met this picket. He had a sign "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work," so I questioned him. He said that they would not hire any black clerks. Woolworths would not hire any black clerks. "We're picketing this store on the South Side, and we're picketing the main store downtown. All black people are to stay out." So I said, "Fine, I'll go." That made quite an impression on me. They kept their campaign up about two months. The next time that I went to Chicago and went to Woolworths, I saw three black clerks.

Here, we organized this club, this organization, to get people to trade with people who were employing Negroes. Again, we made another survey and we found out all the little stores in black neighborhoods that were surviving off of black patronage. Mr. King had come into the neighborhood and had a little, small place--a little meat shop--just himself and his wife. He budded out from that little shop into a larger store; then into a large market, off the patronage of the black people on Sacramento Street, in the vicinity.

He first hired two girls, two black girls. Then labor unions got in behind him. He got angry with the labor unions and he put the store on a cooperative basis, that is, a kind of family-basis ownership. Then he let out all of the employees who weren't in the family and put in Chinese clerks.

Chall: Mr. King wasn't Chinese, was he?

Albrier: Yes, he was.

Chall: Oh, he was. So he could do that.

Albrier: He told us he did that in order to get by the union, because if he did that, the union couldn't picket him. They couldn't do anything about it because it was a family-affair-based store. We didn't agree with him because his patronage came from the black people in the community, so we asked him to put those two girls back, and

Albrier: he wouldn't. So we decided to picket him. We had an attorney by the name of Jay Maurice who was the attorney who advised us and who had had a great deal of work with unions and picketing, and the law. He advised us that if we were going to picket King, we should first go to the police department and inform them. Then we were not to have any fights or loitering on the streets, or any crowds of people in front of the store, or anything that was against the law. He gave us all the laws on how we should conduct the picket.

Chall: Was he a black attorney?

Albrier: Yes. So they said, "They may throw rotten eggs; they may use the word 'Nigger.' They may use all kinds of words to get you angry, to start a fight. If you start a fight then you'll have to stop your picketing because you're disturbing the peace. The police would have to move in on you." As long as we were having a peaceful picket, nothing could be done.

A great many of the men wanted to take the picket, but I said I would take that picket that first time in the morning. They could say anything they wanted to say and I wouldn't start any fight or even answer them. So I took the picket the first day, the first morning of the picket of King's store. It was "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work."

The black community all understood it. Across the street was MacMar; it's now Safeway. But the MacMar store was prominent then. Safeway took over MacMar's store. They had one black clerk, Miss Tilghman, who worked in there. It threw all the trade over to MacMar's, away from King's store. Anyway, we picketed that store three weeks. Finally he found out that the people were not coming back in and buying from him, even if he did have turnip greens at five cents a bunch, or pig's tails at three cents a pound. Nothing attracted them to come in and buy from him. He put those two girls back to work to please the black community. He still has the store.

Chall: Is that so?

Albrier: That's right.

Chall: Are there blacks working there now?

Albrier: He's always hired some blacks. We boycotted any number of stores that we knew had a large percentage of black trade and didn't hire any blacks. That was one of the civil rights employment revolutions on employment that was going on all over the country at that time.

Chall: Yes. That was in around 1930 to 1940, during the Depression.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: The Sacramento Street Market, owned by Mr. King, is the one you have in your scrapbook. There were others, then, you said.

Albrier: There were other stores on Seventh Street where there was a large population of black people living. Those stores would be established in the center of this population, and they got all of their trade from black people.

Chall: Were you successful as you went from one to another?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: How was this accepted in the black community? Were there differences of opinion as to whether you should be out with the pickets and doing things of this kind, again--out in the public--or did they feel you could be doing this by talking quietly behind the scenes to the managers of the stores?

Albrier: We had quite an organization that was in that movement. We had the backing of the community.

Chall: You did.

Albrier: We had the backing of <u>all</u> the community. For instance, we had the backing of NAACP, the ministers, the church groups--

Chall: Right from the start.

Albrier: Yes. We always, before we did anything like that, went to all the groups and told them we were proposing to do that. And if we did do it, they would know what it was and why we were doing it. No one got any pay for doing anything in the organization. It was all given. It was a time of Depression, a time when there wasn't any money. It was a time when the people were beginning to wake up and think for themselves, how they were being exploited and how they were being <u>used</u> in their community, even to their buying power.

Chall: There wasn't any opposition to this movement?

Albrier: No.

Chall: What you told me about Chicago, I just read about, and I know that that was a successful venture, but when they tried to do the same thing a few years later in Harlem, there was a great deal of opposition.*

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: I guess it gradually broke down when they discovered they weren't going to get anywhere by this quiet approach. So I wondered what might have happened here--if there had been similar opposition.

Albrier: They had a lot of fights and bitterness in Harlem, after.

Chall: With the same organizer; I guess they called him Sufi. [Sufi Abdul Hamid]

Albrier: Yes. That time was the building of organizations like CORE and all of those organizations.

Chall: So there was unity here.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: But there was apparently some disunity and I wanted to ask you about that. You mentioned in a letter that you wrote to the city manager that your organization, Citizens Employment Council, was organized in September '39. Members were all Negro citizens of the Bay Area. A. James Payne had been the first president. Then, you indicated that early in 1940, an organization called Citizens Committee--Jobs for Negroes with the Reverend H.T.S. Johnson, was organized with similar purposes. Apparently there was some picketing. Both of you were picketing at the same time, as I understand it, in front of some of the stores--the same stores, perhaps. I can't tell.

Albrier: Reverend H.T.S. Johnson was pastor of the Taylor Memorial Methodist Church on Twelfth and Magnolia Streets at that time.

Chall: Is that here in Oakland?

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*Francis L. Broderick and August Meier, eds., Negro Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century (The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1965), pp. 109-118.

Albrier: In Oakland. He was quite a militant pastor and he was interested in Oakland. There was quite a bit of picketing on Seventh Street in Oakland. That's where they were getting into fights and troubles.

Out here, we obeyed strictly the law that our attorney had given us. Down in Oakland, were some of the Italian stores--Italian grocery stores and all of them--where they had asked to give employment--who said they couldn't do it; there wasn't enough money, and this and that and the other. Then when they picketed, they would start fights with the people. They would call the police to come with patrol wagons; people were arrested. The radical group wanted that because that gave them a great deal of publicity. We didn't have that to contend with in Berkeley. Reverend H.T.S. Johnson did--that group in Oakland.

Chall: In Oakland, I see. He was not involved in any way with what you were doing here.

Albrier: He agreed with it, yes. He agreed with it and supported us, because he was the pastor of a church and he had members who lived in Berkeley. But he wasn't involved.

Chall: I see. I didn't understand that from the letter. Well, that's interesting. You were able to do quite a bit in Berkeley, then. Were the Berkeley blacks different from the black citizens of Oakland, or was it the leadership that made them respond differently to some of these matters?

Albrier: The blacks who lived in Berkeley were--Berkeley had an atmosphere that you had to be just right in Berkeley. We had a judge, Judge Young, who, if you were arrested three times for being drunk,--he'd just give you five years out of Berkeley before you came [back.] If your dog barked and you called the police, you had to stop your dog from barking. If your rooster crowed--I remember a lady had a pet rooster up in the hills. The rooster crowed and she had to get rid of that rooster, or stop that rooster from crowing and waking up the neighbors.

Berkeley had a sign over San Pablo as you entered into Berkeley, "Laws Strictly Enforced." It was a different type of people who came to Berkeley.

People who broke the laws and liked to drink, liked good times and a lot of noise, they didn't come to Berkeley to live. We had a different type of citizen who came to live in Berkeley in those days. Especially black people. A great many of the black people that came from the South, they were used to living in segregated districts where there were a lot of black people.

Albrier: Naturally, they stopped in Oakland. Others, who wanted it different, would find homes in Berkeley. We did not have the good-timey type of citizen in Berkeley, as they did in Oakland.

Chall: I did find in your Negro hiring that in 1940 you had to write a special memorandum to women because they were crossing that picket line. You told them Negro women--anybody--should know that they shouldn't be crossing the picket line, that they must help the race to rise. "A race cannot rise any higher than its women will allow it. The future of the race lies within its women." At the bottom of this memorandum, you wrote in pen that only two women crossed the picket line after getting this little article. That's something, I guess, that you passed around in the neighborhood.

Albrier: Oh, yes, I guess so. [Chuckles]

Chall: In 1955--this is about fifteen years later--you were working with an organization called the East Bay Organizations' Employment Committee. Again, the quote, the little phrase that you worked with was "Buy Where You Can Work" and you had offices in Berkeley and Oakland at that time. One on 3109 Telegraph Avenue and one at 1314 Ashby Avenue in Berkeley.

Albrier: I think that was the one where a great many of the ministers were involved in at that time. There was so much unemployment among the blacks that we felt we had to have an organization, again, to make people appreciate the trade of the blacks in these organizations and businesses. If the blacks refused to give them the business, they would feel it, because a great many of them were in black neighborhoods. Three fourths of their customers were black, and they should give some kind of consideration to the black community which was so desperately in need of employment.

Chall: Do you think this was as effective a campaign in '55, do you recall, as it was in '40?

Albrier: Yes, it was quite effective, because it was headed by ministers, and they spearheaded it.

Chall: This was so well organized. It had quite an impressive letterhead, and the whole community was involved. In the other one, in 1940, I notice from your scrapbook that you had mass meetings quite often in a club--what was it called--the Angus Club. That seemed to be the headquarters where you would hold your meetings. What was the Angus Club?

East Bay Organizations' Employment Committee

"BUY WHERE YOU CAN WORK"

OFFICES:
3109 TELEGRAPH, OAKLAND, CALIF.
HUmboldt 3-5600

1314 ASHBY AVENUE, BERKELEY, CALIF.
THornwall 3-4002

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REV. H. SOLOMON HILL
General Chairman

VIOLA TAYLOR
Vice Chairman

NEITHA WILLIAMS
Secretary

LILLIAN M. POTTS
Treasurer

ACTION COMMITTEE
Attorney Hiawatha Roberts
Albert McKee
Co-Chairmen

BRIEFING COMMITTEE
Estelle Earl
Ozelle Laundry
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Wayne Gaskin
Monitor

EDUCATIONAL COMMITTEE
Rev. Edward Stovall
Rev. Roy Nichols
Co-Chairmen
Frances Albrier
Secretary

FINANCE COMMITTEE
Rev. J. L. Richard
Paul Grant
Co-Chairmen
Ruby Ann Bims
Secretary
Joseph W. Freeman
O. Jackmon
Business Contacts
Dr. Guy Ginn
Dr. Boliver Moore
Profesional Contacts

RESEARCH
Frank Clark
Flip Benson
Co-Chairmen

SOME AFFILIATING ORGANIZATIONS
Acacia Lodge, No. 7
F. & A. M.

Baptist Ministers' Union

California State Association
of Colored Women
(Northern Section)

Civil Liberties Department
I. B. P. O. E. of W.

COSMOTOLOGYST GROUP
East Bay Council of Clubs

Federation of Negro
Women's Clubs

Interdenominational
Ministers' Alliance

Little Citizens' Study and
Welfare Club

Men of Tomorrow

N. A. A. C. P.
Oakland and
Alameda Branches

Northern California
Funeral Directors

Northern California
Physicians
Dental and
Pharmaceutical Association

Real Estate Brokers

West Gate Lodge, No. 36
F. & A. M.

SPEND YOUR MONEY WHERE YOU CAN WORK !!

Do the stores you're spending money in TODAY hire Negroes?
If they do hire Negroes, are they employed at ALL job levels?
Or do they employ Negroes in the LOWEST paying jobs only?

Show this card to your salesman or merchant and tell him
YOU WILL SPEND YOUR MONEY WHERE YOU CAN WORK !!

COOPERATE FOR MORE JOBS

East Bay Organizations' Employment Committee
Composed of: Ministers, Civic Leaders, Fraternal Groups & the NAACP

Rev. H. SOLOMON HILL
Chairman

NEITHA WILLIAMS
Secretary

Rev. EDW. STOVALL
Chairman, Educational Committee

1314 Ashby Avenue, Berkeley
THornwall 3-4002

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Mrs. Frances Albrier
THornwall 5-4772

1955

Letterhead and card indicating activity of the employment committee.

Albrier: The Angus CLub was a club of men--kind of a social club of men. It had a little hall, a little building. Clubs and organizations would meet in that building.

Chall: Black mostly.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: How were these meetings attended? You called them mass meetings and I assume you wanted everyone to come. Were they well attended?

Albrier: They were quite well attended, yes.

Chall: People were really stirred up over this issue, then?

Albrier: Yes. Those who heard about it felt, "Well, there's something going on and I'll go see what it is."

Chall: How'd you get those leaflets around? Were the young people helping you at that time?

Albrier: I must say that's why I have always worked with the youth and discussed things with them, and let them know what things are about. I was very active in the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts. At that time, they did not take black boys and girls in the scout movement. We had our own scouts. Those youngsters always helped us in getting leaflets out. In fact, they would call and ask if we had any leaflets to give out. They would do it.

Chall: They earned their citizenship badges.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: That's very good. So you had the community working--all elements of it, I guess--if they cared to.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: How could you afford, in '55, to keep two offices open: one in Berkeley and one in Oakland? Was there somebody who operated the telephone, or did you have to pay--?

Albrier: Which one of those offices was that?

Chall: Well, let's see. There was one at 3109 Telegraph--that was the Oakland office--and at 1314 Ashby--they might have been churches, for all I know.

Chall: This was 1955, the East Bay Organizations' Employment Committee.

Albrier: Oh, that's the one--that was a church.

Chall: Those were probably churches, then?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: It was organized at the A.M.E.--that's African Methodist Episcopal Church--

Albrier: That's right, yes.

Chall: --Thirty-Seventh and Telegraph.

Albrier: Yes. You see, that organization was composed of the Ministerial Alliance. Anytime we wanted to have a meeting in any of the church buildings, they were open to us.

Chall: Were there problems in those days in keeping the radicals out? Or was this a different time?

Albrier: No, it was different times. If they were extremely radical, we didn't know it. They fell in line with us.

That was encouraging black people to go into business also and employ their own people.

World War II: Breaking the Racial Barriers

The Red Cross: Auto Mechanics for Women Drivers

Chall: The first thing you did, apparently, after we went to war--1942--was to complete a course for auto mechanics for women drivers. Eight lessons at the Berkeley Evening Trade School. Then you went on to do the welding classes. What did you have in mind when you went into this?

Albrier: That has to do with the Red Cross, that time in the war. The Red Cross, at that time, did not take in any black women into their motor corps, to drive in the motor corps. I think you will see a certificate that I received from them.

Chall: Yes.

Albrier: I decided then to break down that discrimination because we were going into war, and so many of our young black people--men--were going into war. Of course, we had President Roosevelt and the others, fostering the war. We were fighting for these different things we were supposed to be fighting for, social equality and all of that. At the beginning of the war, there were some people who went to the Red Cross--black people--who wanted to give their blood. They said that they didn't take black peoples' blood.

I made up my mind that I was going to break through this Red Cross issue, because I knew they would need women drivers. So I took this course. That was one of the requirements that you take this course because the men would be in other fields and you should know something about a car when it broke down. The little things about the car--whether it was the battery or the cable, or any of those things. To change a tire, you must know how to do that. Because women had to take these things and learn how to do it. I decided to take that course. After I decided to take that course, I applied to go into the Red Cross motor corps, for which I was accepted. But they never called. Even to the uniform. I was given a certificate for getting the uniform. The war started on and it kept on. Since we're in the war business, I guess I should tell about the camp. The soldiers. It's in the scrapbook.

Chall: Is that the DeFremery USO?

Albrier: Yes.*

Integrating Women Welders in the Kaiser Shipyards, 1942-1943

[Interview 5: January 12, 1978]
[begin tape 5, side 1]

Chall: Now, let's see. What we left off with last month was this general topic of your working on behalf of black employment opportunities. We were just about to start with getting women into shipyards. What I picked up from your scrapbook was that in August, September, of 1942, you entered Central Trade School, I guess it was, in Oakland, and took classes from eleven--is that right--11:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m.?

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*See Chapter VI.

Albany Times, Wednesday, April 20, 1977

Here's what happened to Rosie the Riveter

By WOODY JOHANNES
I-G Staff Writer

ALBANY — There were thousands of "Rosie the Riveters" during the hectic days of World War II — women who manned America's assembly lines, tackled factory work and, frequently, filled key jobs in heavy construction. This all-volunteer corps furnished replacements for men going into military service.

Their accomplishments are legendary. Working eight, 10 and 12 hour shifts, the Rosies maintained (and in some cases increased) production of military and civilian supplies. While Churchill was promising nothing but blood, sweat and tears, Rosie was delivering the tools, fuels and weapons of war in a steady stream — a flow that became a major factor in stemming the advance of Hitler and Hirohito.

A song of the era, "Rosie the Riveter," gave the gallant crews their name, and the "men's work" they did gave them international fame. But several wars and three decades later the memories of their contributions have faded.

Now a pair of film producers — Connie Field and Lorraine Kahn, are launching plans which they hope will revive and perpetuate those memories — and give Rosie her rightful place in history.

The two East Coast women have spent a year researching the Rosie phenomenon as a preliminary step in filming "The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter." Most of their research has been concentrated in New York, Detroit and Los Angeles and — most recently — in the Bay Area. Their principal question: "What ever happened to Rosie?," has been answered by some 400 women. Over a hundred of the old crew have been discovered in this area, and at least one still resides in Albany.

Irene Rosenberg Petrel, now living at 1320 Marine Ave., was a student at UC when Pearl Harbor was attacked. She promptly applied for, and got, a job at the Mare Island shipyards where her father and sister also were employed. She was signed on as an electrician's helper second class — the first woman in the shipyard's electrician's department.

After WW II was properly disposed of, Irene completed her education and then went to work for the Shell Development Co. (research division of Shell Petroleum), and worked there as a draftsman for 16 years.

Apparently she still experiences some nostalgia. "The war period was the only time I can remember in which the U.S. had full employment and women could almost choose what kind of work they went into," she recalled recently.

Clovis Walker, who has made her home in Richmond for the past 35 years, came from Arkansas to get a war job. Kaiser Shipyards gave her just three days of training as a welder, and put her to work on shell-welding.

"Proportionately it was the most money I've ever made," she said yesterday. After the war she enrolled in a beauticians' college and, upon completion of the course, went to work in a Richmond beauty salon. She retired recently.

Before the war, Francis Albier of Berkeley worked in a book bindery on a WPA project. After hostilities got under way she entered a welders' school in Oakland, attending classes from 11 p.m. to 4 a.m. to learn the trade. The instruction qualified her for a Kaiser Shipyards job and, after six months of work, she was given journeyman rank. Mrs. Albier now lives at 1621 Oregon St.

Connie Watkins Billings' principal business experience, prior to the war, was working in a service station and restaurant operated by her family. She left the Bay Area in 1942 to take a job in Lockheed's Los Angeles plant.

"So many women were being hired that I thought: 'Why don't I try asking for a job on the swing shift?.' I filled out an application and they put me to work as a riveter and later promoted me to template and layout work.

"But the day the war ended I was laid off," she lamented. Mrs. Billings returned to the Bay Area and now is living at 118 Sunnyside Ave. in Piedmont.

Dot Mahoney made radar tubes during the war, using lathes and open flames. She was the first woman to work at Heinz and Kaufman, making vacuum transmitting tubes for radio stations.

"But I was laid off with the rest of the women workers hired for the war effort when VJ day came. Since that time I've worked in a hospital, for a telephone company, and for an answering service. And I've raised six children."

Mrs. Mahoney's most recent job was as a switchboard operator. She is living at 4132 Joan Ave. in Concord, and currently is unemployed and seeking work.

These Rosies apparently are typical of the World War II contingent that fought on the home front, according to researchers Field and Kahn. Their lives "are typical of Rosie — tell what really happened to Rosie the Riveter."

"Common myth has it that women took defense jobs for patriotic reasons only," Ms. Field said. "We are finding that most women worked before the war, needed to work during the war, and transferred to defense jobs because of the higher pay. We want to create a film which reflects this reality. So we're asking the former Rosies, who are willing to be interviewed, to call us, collect, at 415/843-8552."

Ms. Kahn added: "We want to recapture the important work these women performed, the fights against racism and sexism waged on the home front during the war, the pride and dignity that women and minorities felt during these times. We intend to show how this period changed their lives forever, and how their work was vital in changing the course of history."

" 'The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter' will be an hour-long documentary funded by foundation grants and private individuals. We expect to complete the project within another year for network television and for screening before unions, churches, women's groups, community organizations, schools and colleges."

Meanwhile, Rosie the Riveter still is very much with us.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: To learn to be a welder, and that you qualified, after two months of classes.

Albrier: Did you get that was sponsored by the government through Merritt College? I think that's in the scrapbook, so you can check that--

Chall: I probably just missed some of the facts. This class at Merritt, then, was sponsored by the government?

Albrier: Yes, it was.

Chall: Specifically to train--

Albrier: Sponsored by the government, specifically to train welders--not specifically women, but anyone who liked to be welders. They didn't get any stipends at that time. It was the beginning of the war before Kaiser shipyards was finished and completed.

Chall: In Richmond. [California]

Albrier: In Richmond.

Chall: Were there men in your class, those hours, as well as women?

Albrier: Yes. Those hours were specifically made for women who had homes and were busy with families. They were home in the daytime. They were able to run their homes, take care of their homes and families, and take this course.

Chall: How many of you in the course were black--women and men? Do you recall? Were you a real minority among them?

ALbrier: No, it was a mixture of black and white together, men and women. That course was more women.

Chall: More women.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Black women?

Albrier: Yes, other black women--women of all nationalities.

Chall: Did you take anybody in there with you--any of your friends?

Albrier: Yes, one of my friends who encouraged and begged me to go and take the course because she was taking the course, Mae Bondurant. She was Dr. Bondurant's wife.

Chall: Was it a deliberate design of hers and yours that you were--not only were you going to be welders, but that you were going to break the color line?

Albrier: No. We had no idea of breaking the color line; we just felt that we would like this as a new field for women, and we would like to be welders. We had read that the government was going to have to use welders, use everybody, in building ships. Kaiser began to talk about the ships, Victory Ships. There were so many Victory Ships to be built on the West Coast. They would need all of these crafts in building these ships to win the war. So a great many women in organizations felt that their sons were leaving--husbands were leaving, going to war, and being drafted--that they should be doing something back home. That was the general idea throughout the nation at that time.

Chall: I just wondered what might have prompted you because I know that after you finished your course, I saw a letter that you wrote to the California Voice. [September 25, 1942] You were discussing your attempts at being hired as a welder because the union wouldn't take you in. You said that they--and you were referring to Negro women--[reading from scrapbook] ". . . are working, praying and I hope will fight to see that those who are fortunate enough to have their brothers, sons and husbands return home, can enjoy a little democracy for which they fought. Our aim is a double aim, a double V." By that, I thought you were meaning victory--

Albrier: Victory, yes.

Chall: Victory in war, and victory for--was it black women, or all women?

Albrier: It was victory for black women and the democratic procedure.

[Interview interrupted by phone call. Ensuing static required some reconstruction of the dialogue]

Chall: How did you learn to weld to be ready to work in the shipyards?

Albrier: They required sixty hours of training, but I put in twice that number of hours. I took 120 hours in training so that I could be very well prepared. I felt that I had to be better because I

Albrier: was a black woman. I wanted to do the work perfectly--to make a perfect bead. I had to be better to hold a job, otherwise I couldn't compete with the white women.

I had a friend who lived in Oakland and who finished her sixty hours. She went to Moore's shipyards and was working months before I was.

My instructor wanted to know why I was still coming to school. He said, "You know how to weld; you don't need to be in class anymore." I explained to him how hard it was for a black person to get a job in industry or in the unions, and that in order for me to compete I had to know the work perfectly and that's why I had to keep coming to class--to be perfect.

Chall: What was his response?

Albrier: The response was, "Well, I can't teach you any more. It's time for you to go into the shipyards." He said, "I think you can make it because you're well trained." He suggested that I go and apply at Kaiser shipyards because he said that was the best shipyard for women. It wasn't cluttered up with a lot of beams and things in the walkways which you had to walk over and drag your welding hose over, like Moore's shipyards. Kaiser shipyards was being built and they were a cleaner and better shipyard. He thought women should go there. He advised me to go and apply at Kaiser. He said, "I know you'll pass the test because you know it."

Chall: This was the time when women were going to work in industry?

Albrier: Yes, yes. This was the end of the Depression when we went into war against Germany and Japan. The shipyards were advertising for workers and everybody was looking for employment. Nobody had any money. People had lost their jobs. My husband was lucky. He had been kept on his job with the Southern Pacific. They decreased his pay but he was still employed. But millions had no jobs and they were on welfare. That was one reason, too, why so many women went into training as welders and burners and different fields of labor in the shipyards.

Chall: When you applied at Kaiser, were you hired?

Albrier: After my instructor advised me to go to Kaiser, I went to Kaiser. But first I went to Moore's shipyard because I knew they were hiring black welders there. They already had an auxiliary union and there was no problem about hiring. I took the test and passed it.

Albrier: Then I went to Kaiser shipyard number two because my instructor had advised me to try there. I took the test and passed it with flying colors. This happened to be on Saturday morning. There were about seven or eight of us who hadn't filled out the papers and hadn't been assigned to anything. The young man who was registering us said to come back on Monday morning because it was twelve o'clock noon and the unions were closed at twelve.

Albrier: Then he called to me and gave me his name and told me to call him on Monday before I came back. I knew--

Chall: Were you the only black person?

Albrier: I was the only black person in that crowd at that time. So I said, "All right", but I knew very well why he wanted me to call. So Monday I did. I called him before I went to the shipyards. I said, "Why is it you specifically wanted me to call you? Was it because you know the union won't take Negroes as welders?" Yes, he said that was the reason, and he asked why I didn't go to Moore's where I could work.

There was a Boilermakers, Iron, Shipbuilders and Helpers Union there but they had not yet set up an auxiliary to take in Negroes at Kaiser. In these AFL craft unions Negroes could become members only of an auxiliary.

I went anyway and I stood in line behind the other women who had passed the test and I heard the clerk ask them routine questions, and I watched them fill out their cards. When it was my turn, I got to the window; I gave my card. The young lady said, "There's been no arrangement made to accept you into the union so you can be employed."

There were several service men standing in the hall and one asked me what was said to me. I told him my story. There were two white and two blacks. They stated out loud so all of the personnel and others could hear, "Is that the democracy we are being drafted to fight for? The first thing we should do is to tear up this hall." I learned later that they were university students. However, I thanked them for their sympathy and told them I was not giving up the fight although civil rights and democracy were evasive sometimes.

I then decided that I must talk to the chairman of Kaiser shipyards and challenge him about the employment of Negroes, both Negro men and women, as burners and welders. I went to shipyard four where the offices were located. There I met the receptionist at the desk. I requested to see the chairman or

Albrier: director of Kaiser shipyards because they are discriminating; they are not hiring Negro women or men as burners and welders; that I had completed my training of one hundred and twenty hours as a welder, passed the test in Moore's and this shipyard; I preferred to work in these shipyards as was suggested by my welding instructor.

[Machine static stopped at this point.]

Albrier: "If there's discrimination in hiring at this shipyard, I want to know it from the chairman or president, because that's against the government's rules, and I know it. The government is calling for all citizens who are citizens of the United States and want to see this country still exist and not be beaten, to take up these crafts so we can build these Victory Ships and send our men over. I mean to win that war. I'm one of those persons who wants the United States to win the war!"

She said, "Well, I'll call him." She called him and told him what I said. He said, "Tell Mrs. Albrier to wait and I'll talk to her. I'm busy." So I waited about a half hour. Then he called back and said, "You're wrong, Mrs. Albrier, Kaiser shipyards don't discriminate against any citizen, but we have that contract in those crafts that you have to be certified by the union because the union has those crafts sewed up. They are the ones, not Kaiser." I said, "Well, Kaiser should have something more to do with it. Maybe I should sue Kaiser." [Chuckles]

Chall: You were pretty spunky. [Laughs]

Albrier: He said, "You go over and talk to our public relations man in shipyard number three. I'll call him and tell him that you're coming, and see if something can't be worked out." But I'm sure when he called him he told him what to do with me--to okay me. I went over and saw the public relations man and he said, "You're Mrs. Albrier?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, that's all right. We've taken care of you." He signed the card and said, "Go back to the union hall to window seven and give them this card. Ask for the director of the union."

Chall: He went over the head of the union?

Albrier: I went to the union hall and got in line again and met the same clerk. She said, "Didn't I tell you that we couldn't do anything in signing you?" I said, "I know, but I have an appointment to see this man [I forget the name of the director of the union]--" She said, "He's out but he's over in room number two. Just sit

Albrier: there. When he comes in, you give that to him." I gave it to him. He okayed it and said, "Go back to window number seven."

I went back to window number seven and she asked me the regular routine questions about my family and who to call if you become ill or if there's an accident; your age and all of that that they have to put on the card. I saw the other women in line when I was in line before had twenty dollars, so I felt that I was joining the union. I took out twenty dollars and put it there. She said, "You won't need to pay anything today." So I said, "All right." She okayed it and said, "Now take this over to the shipyard. They will tell you what time to come to work. They will assign you to where you are to work as a welder." So I took the card over to the shipyard and gave it to the clerk there. They told me to come to work. I chose to go to work from three to nine. That's how I got on in the shipyard--Kaiser shipyard. There were only two black women, but I was the only one who really looked black because the other woman was very fair.

Chall: So she passed without anybody noticing?

Albrier: Yes. When I walked in the shipyard with the welding leather clothing on--you have to wear all leather--coat, pants as a welder, the shipyard hat--the shipwrights, the black shipwrights, stopped and said, "How did you get in here? How did you make it in here, because they are not hiring any black welders out here." I said, "Well, I just happened to bust my way in here. I sent a wire to President Roosevelt to tell him that they were not hiring any black welders in these shipyards." They said, "More power to you! Glad to see you."

That was my experience in getting on in the shipyard, but it didn't finish my experience. I worked in the shipyard six months. In six months time, my work was qualified and they promoted me to a journeyman welder. A notice was put in my box, when I went to check out, telling me that when I returned to work to go to the office. When I returned to work, I went to the office; got in line behind others. In my turn, I got to the desk and said, "I understand I've been promoted to journeyman." The young lady said, "You have. We want to sign you up as a journeyman. Now, you'll make more money." I said, "Is that as far as I can go in promotion?" She said, "You're a journeyman--that's as far as you can go. That means that you have accomplished and learned the work well and that you are master in your craft. Where is your union card?"

Albrier: I said, "I don't have any union card." She asked me three times for my union card. The third time she said, "I can't make up this data on this sheet without your union card." I said, "I don't have any." She said, "Don't stand there and tell me that you have worked six months and you're a journeyman without a union card?!" I said yes, so she flew back into the back office and seemed to become very aggravated with me; angry with me, as if she thought I was standing there kidding her. She had never had that experience. All the people she had registered--everyone of them had a union card and had come through the Boilermakers Union.

Finally another, older clerk came out, an older clerk, and she said, "I want to make apologies for that young lady. She didn't understand, Mrs. Albrier. She didn't know that you could work up to be a journeyman and not have a union card. Let's fill out your papers." She said, "I'll fill out your papers." Two months later, I received a letter in my box when I went to work. It said, "Dear Mrs. Albrier, arrangements have been made for your participation in the Union 513 Boilermakers Union as a welder. Please come over [on a certain date--I forget the date] and be initiated into Union 513 Boilermakers Union." That meant that I had worked about seven months without paying any dues in the shipyard. Later I learned that they had established then an auxiliary for black workers on welding and burning, and an office for them to pay their monthly dues. It was over on another street. All the black workers were to go over there and pay their dues. But I was so angry about it, I wouldn't do it. I told them I wasn't going over there and pay the dues. It was out of my way and I had gotten used to coming to this address, and I would pay my dues at this address. And I did. They accepted it. I know they sent the dues on over to the auxiliary.

It was about nine, ten months later. Kaiser was in a rush for more Victory Ships. They were turning out those ships as fast as they could, working night and day. They were sending calls all over the country for people to come to California and work in Kaiser shipyards, building Victory Ships.

No. 56306

International Brotherhood of Boiler Makers, Iron Ship Builders & Helpers of America

LOCAL No. 513

7th and Macdonald Ave., Richmond, Calif.

Reg. No. ..... Date 1-25-43

Received of INITIATION

- ☐ Change of Rating $ .....
- ☑ Initiation - - - $ 15.00
- ☐ Reinstatement - $ .....
- ☐ ..... - $ .....
- ☐ Balance - - - $ .....

If balance is not paid within 30 days, membership is cancelled and all payments forfeited.

144 REPRESENTATIVE.

INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF BOILERMAKERS
LOCAL #513 7th & MacDonald, RICHMOND

You are hereby notified that arrangements have now been completed for your representation in the INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF BOILERMAKERS and it is necessary that you come to this office at once and complete your payments and be initiated as you are not a member until recorded as such on the records of International.

The application fee is $15.00.

Please attend to this immediately.

H. E. Patton,
1-25-43 International Representative

Frances Mary Albrier

3130

D M Wilson

27497

A C Lawton

135a

International Brotherhood of Boiler Makers, Iron Ship Builders & Helpers of America

LOCAL No. 513

707 MACDONALD AVENUE
Entrance on 7th Street
TELEPHONE: RICHMOND 4081 — 4082
RICHMOND, CALIFORNIA

RULES GOVERNING APPLICATIONS

ALL APPLICANTS MUST PAY THEIR FULL FEE WITHIN THIRTY DAYS

Payments may be made on the following time and days:

Monday—9: A. M. to 5:00 P. M.
Tuesday—9:00 A. M. to 5:00 P. M.
Wednesday—9:00 A. M. to 5:00 P. M.
Thursday—9:00 A. M. to 5:00 P. M.
Friday—9:00 A. M. to 5:00 P. M.

INITIATION AT
MOOSE HALL
615 MACDONALD, RICHMOND

No application fees accepted on Saturdays.

ALL PAYMENTS ON APPLICATIONS, NOT COMPLETED WITHIN THIRTY DAYS, SHALL BE FORFEITED.

WHEN MAKING FINAL PAYMENT BRING YOUR RECEIPT WITH YOU.

Final payment must be made before day of initiation.

Upon making final payment, applicant must be initiated and obligated not later than the following week.

Initiation and obligation meetings are held once each week, every Tuesday at 10:00 A. M., 1:00 P. M. and 7:00 P. M. in the Richmond Labor Temple, 5th and Macdonald.

When initiated and obligated, applicant will be given instructions pertaining to membership, payment of dues, etc.

No applicant becomes a member until he is recorded on the books of the International Secretary-Treasurer in Kansas City, Kansas, our International Headquarters.

No deviation from these rules will be permitted.

MAKE YOUR FINAL PAYMENT NOT LATER THAN .....

Fighting Discrimination in the Department of Employment

Albrier: They called, and the fever of earning money and more money than people had ever thought of being able to earn, was prevailing throughout the country. They opened up the high schools to teach welding and burning. Berkeley High School was one of them. They had a building where they taught welding. You'd go and sign up--citizens and young people would go and sign up--to learn how to weld and to burn.

In the meantime, any number of younger black women had done this and had passed the course in the high schools. They were instructed to go to the employment office first, and the employment office was to send them to the unions to sign up. That was done because the government was taking a part in the number of people who were signed up in welding and burning and who had taken these courses. I think they wanted to keep a record. It was done through the educational systems--high schools, trade schools, and those schools that taught those crafts.

There were about eight young women who lived in Berkeley and Oakland who had passed this training and had gone out to the employment office. They told them they were sending them--they were recommending them to go to Moore's shipyards. It got out that Mrs. Albrier was working as a welder in Kaiser shipyards. "How come Mrs. Albrier got on? How had she got on? We would like to work at Kaiser's because we live in Berkeley, nearer. We won't have to go all the way to Oakland to the shipyards." So they called me and questioned.

I asked them the procedure they had gone through. They said they were told to go to the employment office. They had gone to the employment office in Richmond. I asked them what they had said to them. They said that the officer in the employment office had told them of the discrimination of the union--that blacks were being hired in Oakland because they had an auxiliary and they hadn't set up an auxiliary at that time in Richmond. So, the union wasn't allowing blacks to come in as burners and welders. They said, "Well, we know one black person who's working as a welder." They didn't say any more; they came and got me.

I went out to the employment office with another lady, Mrs. Lillian Dixon, who was then the legislative chairman of the California State Association of Colored Women's Clubs.

Albrier: We went to the office and talked to a young man who had interviewed these young women and advised them not to go to Local 513 to be employed as welders, but to go to Moore's. I reminded him that he had broken the law. The government was crying and appealing for people to learn these crafts so they could build these ships. I told him my experience with the employment department was that in their guideline book, it stated that where an employer was discriminatory and might use discrimination in hiring different people, to inform that person of the attitude of the employer before sending him out to that possibly discriminatory employer.

[end tape 5, side 1; begin tape 5, side 2]

Chall: You were explaining to the employment department that they weren't supposed to be discriminating, that if an employer were discriminating--

Albrier: --to inform the job seeker of their attitude before they sent the person to them.

Chall: Yes, but let them go, anyway.

Albrier: Yes, because the person seeking the position or job might be able to explain to them, or prevail upon them, to give them a chance. Let them try. If they did not prove out, to let them go, but to give them a chance. Some employers would.

Chall: That's the way you did it.

Albrier: This employment office agent--well, he wasn't an agent, but director--was misinformed, or else he was working with the union and not sending blacks over there as welders. So, Mrs. Dixon and I told him that we would go to the state employment office and have this settled. He asked us not to go to the state; he would do it. Then we said, "You are protecting this union. You should have sent these girls over and let them tell them they were not hiring them and send a requisition of that back to Washington." He said that he would do that and he would send a requisition on what happened to these young women back to Washington.

A. Philip Randolph and Executive Order 8802

Albrier: In the meantime, A. Philip Randolph came on the scene about blacks throughout the nation in the shipyards not being employed. That they were standing outside the fences, looking in, wanting to be employed. But because they were black, they were discriminated against in the higher crafts. Now, when I went to Kaiser's, if I had wanted to be a laborer--if I wanted to sweep the yards and pick up bolts, and things like that, they employed every person they could. But they could not employ me as a welder. Randolph then contacted President Roosevelt and told him of these thousands of black people, citizens, standing outside the shipyards, wanting employment and wanting to work, who couldn't work because they were black and because of the discrimination in these different crafts. He said that he was going to start a march on Washington and let the world know that we were fighting for democracy, but we weren't extending democracy to its own citizens.

President Roosevelt said, "You can't do that. We're at war." These are Mr. Randolph's words, in his report to the NAACP. He reported his interview with the president about that. He said, "We're at war, Mr. Randolph, you can't do that. I'll give an executive order against that." Mr. Randolph said, "Well, you give an executive order and go on the air so <u>everybody</u> will know and hear you." And the president did just that. That was Executive Order 8802, one of the most famous executive orders against discrimination, and, I think, one of the first ones made by a president.

Chall: It was after that, after the issuance of that executive order, that the auxiliary in Local 513 was formed?

Albrier: Was formed, yes.

Chall: It took <u>that</u> to form it?

Albrier: Yes, to break down these different crafts in the union.

Chall: I understand, from the oral history of Mr. C.L. Dellums that we took several years ago, that he and a man named Clarence Johnson--this was prior to Pearl Harbor, but we were still gearing up for war--had gotten men into Kaiser shipyards in Richmond. Apparently, it took them several days of constant negotiations. Dellums said that he, too, was ready to call Washington at that point, but the shipyards finally conceded. They took just two men into that union. Two years later,

Chall: Dellums says, there were ten thousand Negroes in the yards, and that Lena Horne came out and launched the George Washington Carver Victory Ship.

Albrier: Yes, after that, many welders and burners were admitted to the Kaiser shipyards. Moore's, remember, Moore's took them in before the breakdown. Kaiser, after the government gave the call throughout the nation, and people were coming out here from all of the states--black people from all of the states were coming out here to work and to earn this money. It put them on their feet economically after the trials of a depression. There were so many of them, there were hardly housing places for them to stay.

Chall: That must have caused a real problem.

Albrier: They were staying in garages, anyplace they could find. They were sending out the call for people with homes who had extra rooms to share with these workers who were in the shipyards, building the Victory Ships. The government needed them so badly at that time.

Chall: Even with it all, they were not ready to hire blacks, except with pressure.

Albrier: The pressure, when they came, pressure had been put on and they had begun to open because letters, telegrams and calls had gone back to Washington on that. Firms like Kaiser had themselves put pressure on. Here are these people, and they needed them to build these ships, and they had contracts with the government to turn out so many ships, and they couldn't do it without the people. They were training welders and encouraging people to take welding and burning so they would learn to build these ships so they could get them out--

Standing Up to Prejudice

Chall: When you tell me now how the conversations went between you and the clerks, and the Kaiser people and the union people, you do it with great ease, without any show of emotion too much. But how did you feel about it at the time that you were doing it? Were you as calm and able to be as rational in your approach as you are now? Or did it upset you at that time?

Chall: You were on the front line and you weren't going to take any of this discrimination. But you were out there all by yourself. How did you react to this and how did you come home and tell your husband and children about it?

Albrier: I never had any reaction because I was reared that I had to fight for my own rights. Not only mine. When I was fighting for my rights, I was fighting for my people's rights. I was fighting for my family's rights. They were in the same predicament--they happened to be black. It was just automatic for me to stand up and tell a person, "You're wrong. You're mistreating me. You're discriminatory. Why don't you give us a chance?"

Chall: So you always just were able to do it?

Albrier: Yes. My grandmother reared me that way. I learned that in school. That's why I took the hundred and twenty hours.

Chall: You were preparing.

Albrier: I must be prepared. I had to be. I had to make double percentage of what the whites did in order to get the recognition of being prepared. I had to know that much more. One hundred and twenty five percent to get one hundred and fifteen percent grading. If I cleaned a house I had to clean it spotless to get recognition.

Chall: Then you were also astute enough to bring Mrs. Dixon in the next time around.

Albrier: Yes. I became very much interested in women's programs and women's organizations. I knew about this organization from a child up because my grandmother belonged to the Mothers Club, which was started by Mrs. Booker T. Washington in Tuskegee. I used to go to this club with my grandmother. They were interested in students, in paving the way for black students, fighting discrimination in employment, discrimination in any form, building up the communities from an educational standpoint; building the people up through their church and their clubs.

Mrs. Washington was one of the national presidents of these women's clubs that sprang up after the Civil War to educate black women, as many only knew how to work on the farms and pick cotton. I used to go to the meetings with my grandmother, so I automically came up in this type of club work. When I came West, they had the Federation of Colored Women's Clubs which started in 1906, and I immediately joined. I think I started the Department of Women in Industry.

Chall: Yes, you did.

Albrier: At that time.

Chall: Yes, you did, at the same time.

Albrier: Mrs. Dixon was the legislative chairman, the state legislative chairman at that time. That's why I called on her to go with me to protest to the employment office on discrimination in not sending these girls to Kaiser shipyards.

Chall: So you were all pretty well grounded in the laws--

Albrier: We had had any number of problems of discrimination in employment, and in state employment. We knew the laws; we knew the guidelines. The NAACP was the watchdog in having guidelines that would help against discrimination in employment.

Chall: That's important to have your facts in front of you. I know that in those early bulletins of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs that you saved, you wrote for them, for several years, telling women how they should comport themselves and dress. If they were properly prepared and groomed, they could get in and do the work.

Albrier: That has advanced so much now because, just the other day, Edith Austin called me and said that she was interested in getting some young black women in the Skills Center to take welding. They had these funds to train them. There were any number of white women, but she hadn't been able to get any black women interested in welding. In the last class, there was a young black woman who graduated in welding.

She said, "You know how much she makes now?" I said, "No." She said, "Twelve dollars an hour." She was quite disturbed and asked me to help her to get some of the black girls interested, young women who might be interested in taking up this trade. It is a stepping-stone because for a long time, they did not take any women in that class.

Women can weld airplanes. It's much lighter work than in the shipyard. There are so many things now that they weld instead of rivet. They used to rivet the ships, and they welded those ships at that time. Airplanes are welded and it's much easier because it's just a small line to carry around. But it's very technical to make that weld and not burn the metal.

Chall: It's certainly simpler than putting in that nail and riveting. How long did you stay in the shipyard, working there?

Albrier: It was eight months.

Chall: Then what prompted you to leave?

Albrier: I began to have a continuous cold. I don't know whether it was exposure or what it was. But then they had any number of people working in the shipyards and I didn't think they needed me any more because they had many people to be employed and the doors that were shut for blacks were open now.

Chall: You didn't feel your work on the job was that essential anymore, and you had made your point.

Albrier: Yes.

The Meaning of Craft Auxiliary Unions to Black Employment

Chall: What was your opinion, then, of the formation of auxiliaries, as such, to unions as a place for black workers?

Albrier: By my participating and belonging to the auxiliary, to 513, Boilermakers and Welders, it was just giving me a mandate or permission to work.

[Interview interrupted by phone call.]

Chall: That's true. You had to accept the fact that they put Negroes into auxiliaries, but was there any power?

Albrier: What they did was put Negroes into auxiliaries--that was just an okay that you could work. That's all you got. You got none of the other things, or fringe benefits protection--

Chall: Advantages?

Albrier: --advantages of the union, like insurance.

Chall: You didn't?

Albrier: No. Accident policies. We didn't get any of the fringe benefits that went with the union. We just paid to work.

Chall: White workers got certain fringe benefits that you didn't get?

Albrier: That's right. They were bona fide union members or they could not be employed. The contracts were made with the union to supply the skilled and unskilled labor.

Chall: You didn't have a voice in the running of the union, either.

Albrier: No. We were just paying to have the opportunity to work. That's what the auxiliaries were for. After the shipyard closed, they were out. We were not considered union members, bona fide union members.

Chall: What about black men? Did they also have to join auxiliaries? Were they out after the war too?

[Some renewed static]

Albrier: The same thing.

I think it was about seven or eight years afterwards, Local 513 had some officers elected who did not like that policy. They started working on it because at the international conventions, they had black friends who were working in the shipyards and a few other places, mainly shipyards, and they had noted this discrimination. When they were sent back as delegates to the International Boilermakers Union, they protested. This couldn't be wiped out until the International Boilermakers Union did. Then the locals could set policy. So they had to build up delegates and people in that union who were against this, to outvote those who wanted to help blacks out. They had to put it to a test, to vote against discrimination against American citizens because they were black. Finally, they did it. It took, I think about ten or twelve years before they accomplished that. Not only that union; many of the other crafts were the same way. But that's history; that's just what they did. It was quite a jump, when I heard about this young woman who was trained to be a welder and comparing her experience to what it used to be, years ago. And how those doors were now opened.

Chall: There's no way, then, to work at those crafts unless you belong to a union?

Albrier: You don't work on any job. They have those jobs closed. You must belong to the union. Not only 513, the Boilermakers. My experience in the women's auxiliary--the dining car cooks and waiters--same thing. At the time I became interested in that, bakers, cooks, and waitresses were not taken into the white unions.

Albrier: Local 456, who represented us, had a charter from the International Cooks, Waiters, Hotel and Miscellaneous Workers Union. They could take in members of those crafts because they had a charter from the international. The local in Oakland did not take in other crafts. Some of them could. The bartenders was the main one. Some of them could take them in, but they didn't. Did you have bartenders there, too? Cooks, Waiters, Waitresses, Bartenders.

Chall: I have Cooks, Waiters, Hotel, Miscellaneous Workers. Bartenders comes in before--

Albrier: And bartenders. They're all in the same crafts.

Chall: The local in Oakland just set up an auxiliary, is that it?

Albrier: No. They didn't have an auxiliary. Under that craft. But due to the railroads, whose employees were black in those crafts, they had a local under those crafts, Local 456.

Chall: It was their own.

Albrier: We were the auxiliary because we were women, relatives of these men. We were the wives and sisters of the men.

Chall: I see. I was confused. The word auxiliary could be used in two different ways?

Albrier: Yes, that was the women's organization.

Chall: Now I've got that straight. If you were a woman, and if you were a waitress, you could belong to that union?

Albrier: Yes, you could belong to that union. You joined that union and paid your dues and became a member. That's how that union broke down discrimination in the Bay Area, because they took in black workers as union members in those crafts. They went on and took their cards and got the jobs that they had been trying to get. Before they couldn't.

Fighting Discrimination in the Post Office

Chall: After you left the shipyards, you told me told me that you and a friend of yours decided to see what you could do about blacks in the post office. Does that follow somewhere in there?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Was that Ollie Hawkins? Was that somebody you told me about recently? Someone, you had told me, you had gone with into the post office.

Albrier: Ollie Hawkins was one who worked at Camp Knight. After I quit the shipyards, there were still calls, during the war period, for citizens to work in the postal service because there was so much mail for the sick men and injured servicemen overseas that was piling up and they were not getting it. So the call went out from the government to those persons who had the time and were interested, to work in the post office. That was my next job in overseas mail.

Chall: What did you decide to do there? What brought you to that? Now, there you knew definitely that you were going to fight some discrimination.

Albrier: Yes, I knew there was discrimination in the post office at that time. There was discrimination everywhere, in all fields of employment. I applied, and worked in the San Francisco Post Office, under a San Francisco postmaster--I forget his name--I can look it up.

Chall: It doesn't matter if you can't find it.

Albrier: At that time, at Camp Knight, there was a huge military post office, where they sent all of us that applied for employment, to work in that post office. That mail was overseas mail for the military, both navy and army. A great many women were applying for the jobs. A great many of them, white, were coming in from the South, and they brought their prejudice in with them. They didn't want to sit by a black; they didn't want to work with a black.

The blacks were coming in also and they were finding out they had more advantages, so they didn't take discrimination. So it ended up with fights and disagreements in the post office. Something needed to be done about it.

Albrier: Mr. Lane, who was the superintendent then, at the time, was upset and didn't know what to do. He called a few of us in. We said we would set up a club to do some educational work, a postal service club and we'd see if we could iron out all these things. He said, "If I hear of any discrimination, I will not stand for it, because we are fighting against those things. We are fighting for freedom. We are all Americans. That's not my attitude as superintendent of this post office, but I'll need some of you to help me."

Chall: It was just a matter of how you got along--the black and white employees.

Albrier: Yes. And there was discrimination in the post office. Some felt that there was discrimination in elevation, too, to different jobs. Anyway, some of the postal workers got together and said, "We will form an organization and we'll get out a little bulletin for our grievances." They nominated me president of that organization.

Chall: Postal Service Workers. What was the club supposed to do?

Albrier: Well, the club was to promote more unity and to stop discrimination; to hear grievances and bring them up to the supervisors and the superintendents. The supervisors had charge. There were supervisors in the post office that the blacks felt were detrimental to them because they were so discriminatory in their policies. They had nothing to protect them.

When we came up with this club, there were grievance committees that heard both sides; that eliminated a lot of the discriminatory policies that some of the supervisors in the post office had.

For instance, they had bags where mail came in. You would have to shake those bags out, lay them out, and get them ready to go out again. They would call all black workers to go back there and do that dirty work. That caused a lot of friction. Some would; some wouldn't. They would go back and fuss about it. Finally, we noted that and brought the grievance to Mr. Lane, the superintendent.

He ordered that when the supervisors were to send workers back to take care of those bags, they were to send rows of them; he didn't care who was in that row. And the next row. Black, white, whoever was in the row, to do that work. To stop choosing and say, "You go back, and you go back, and you work back in number

Albrier: four that day." Number four was the room where these bags were. That kind of discrimination prevailed, which we were able to stop, with the heads of the postal office, by being organized.

Now, the Postal Clerks Union was discriminatory. They took in no black post office workers. The black postal workers had their own union.

Chall: They did?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: It wasn't called an auxiliary; it was a bona fide union. Black Postal Alliance Union.

Albrier: Yes. It was called Postal Alliance. I think they still operate. But they had a Postal Workers Union under AFL.

Chall: The Postal Clerks Union was AFL?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Was that Postal Clerks or Postal Workers Union?

Albrier: Postal Clerks, I think.

Chall: It wasn't the CIO.

Albrier: No.

Chall: The Postal Alliance was--?

Albrier: Black.

Chall: AFL?

Albrier: No, that wasn't AFL. It was their own, but they had them throughout post offices in the country.

Chall: The Postal Service Workers Club was open to blacks and whites?

Albrier: No. Only blacks.

Chall: Just the blacks. With your grievance procedure.

Albrier: Yes. It was just temporary for that type of work during the war period. A great many of us left that type of work and some kept on. I met some young women who are retired now, who went to work.

Albrier: They took the civil service examination and kept working in the post office. In fact, the war opened up that type of work for blacks that was closed to them before.

Chall: The only thing is that you had to make sure that they could go up the civil service ladder, like the others?

Mr. Lane sounds like a good superintendent.

Albrier: He was a good superintendent. He believed all men should be treated equally.

Chall: It could have been somebody else who didn't care or was discriminatory.

Albrier: Yes, there would have been havoc.

Chall: How long did you stay there?

Albrier: In the postal service? I stayed, I think, a year and six months.

Chall: Did you work during the day there, or were you still on the night shift?

Albrier: I worked during the day. I worked from eight till four.

The Merchant Marines and Discrimination

Chall: During the war, did you have a son who was in the army?

Albrier: No, my son was in the Merchant Marines. The government said all of the men who were qualified and worked in the Merchant Marines, they wanted them to stay there, because the Merchant Marines were the ones who had to take a great deal of the ammunition and materials for the servicemen overseas. Also, they directed the Liberty ships.

Chall: Did he enter at a very low laboring position and work himself up?

Albrier: My son started in that work because, when he was in high school, he decided he wanted to see the world, like boys do. He went over to San Francisco and talked to a captain. He was just sixteen but he told the captain he was eighteen. He was large for his age. The captain said, "I don't believe you, but you look like a good boy. Yes, you can go on my ship." So he said,

Albrier: "I just want to see the world." He said, "All right, I take boys who want to see the world. What can you do?" He said, "I can work in the kitchen because my mother taught me how to bake bread." [Laughter]

I taught all my children how to bake bread, because during the Depression, the government gave free flour, and my grandmother had taught me how to bake bread. So my son had to bake his share of bread with the girls.

He worked with the chef and he traveled all over. When he got off at port, by him being so young, all the older men took him under their wings and told him, "We don't want to see you staying on ship--you go back to school because I left school to go to work. Now I wish I had stayed in school." So he promised them he would go back to school. When they got to different ports, they would tell him where to go and what to see. And he would.

But then he got bitten by the bug, the sea bug, he said. He decided to go to school. In back of his mind, he wanted to be a chief engineer. So he took up marine engineering. Out here in the West, he could not go to the Marine Engineering School as a black, but he went to New York. New York had FEPC at that time.

Chall: Right after the war?

Albrier: Yes. And he went into the Marine Engineering School there. Now he's chief engineer. For many years, he sailed on the ship HOPE, the hospital ship, as the chief engineer.

Chall: I read that. I just wondered how he managed to get up to that position.

Albrier: He could not get it out here. When we were working for FEPC under Assemblyman [Byron] Rumford, when they were having their hearings, I spoke at that hearing on my son and his activity, and I had his picture in his uniform. I showed the assemblymen who were on that hearing his picture. I said, "Here's a boy who was born in San Francisco. He's a Californian. But you see, in this uniform--he couldn't have been in this uniform staying in California. He had to go to New York where they had an FEPC so he could be admitted to the Marine Engineering School, because your unions here did not admit young black men." It was voted out of committee the first time--do pass--FEPC out of the committee. But it took another year or so for that bill to go through.

The Little Citizens Study and Welfare Club

Chall: After the war, immediately after, while we're on the subject of FEPC, you became the president of one more of these little ad hoc committees you set up to accomplish something. This was called the Little Citizens Study and Welfare Club. [Laughter] You were the president and I.O. Pleasant was the secretary. Was that a man?

Albrier: Ida.

Chall: And Mrs. Marshall was the vice-president.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Mary or--

Albrier: Margaret--

Chall: Apparently, you did, I gather, a couple of things, but your main concern was the passage of the FEPC.

Albrier: We worked on that.

Chall: Also, I gather, what would be a normal adjunct of FEPC--that was child care centers.

Albrier: It was kind of a welfare club, too.

Chall: Tell me about it. How it got set up and what it was meant to do?

Albrier: After the war, when things were settling back into place and there wasn't as much employment for blacks as there had been, many black families who had come out here to work, stayed. Some brought their relatives. That meant a population of black citizens in the Bay Area, without funds and who were on welfare; who were untrained, even to live in cities because a great many of them came from rural districts--the backwoods of larger cities in the South. It was quite disturbing to meet with these families and to know their predicament.

The NAACP didn't go into that phase of it, so we needed citizens who were interested in the welfare of other citizens. We knew that there were many citizens who religiously worked in their churches and that's as far as they got. They thought they

THE LITTLE CITIZENS STUDY AND WELFARE CLUB

P R O G R A M

The Little Citizens Study and Welfare Club is happy to have this opportunity to extend sincere Greetings to our Guests attending our "Citizenship" Tea, which is the Theme this year.

We hope that you will enjoy the Program and Speakers. Make yourselves comfortable and stay as long as you wish. One of our special events will be the Guest Speaker--our own News Director and Commentator over K.L.X.--Mr. John K. Chapel--at 5:00 p.m. Judge William McGuiness, Dr. Marvin Paston, and others will also speak. And there will be Musical numbers.

Purpose and Program

Little Citizens--the everyday men and women who make up America--the Common Man. "God loves them; that's why he made so many of them." -- Abraham Lincoln.

We are dedicated to the service of others--to aid them in health, mind and body--to help fit each citizen for a greater service to our Communities and to our Country thereby making a better World, through Education, Welfare and Human Relations.

Mr. W. L. King, Chairman
Mrs. Fannie Williams, Co-chairman
Assisted by:
Mesdames Ruby Poole, Bertha Collins, Holt, Annie Hart, M. Marshall, H. Hayes, Mae King; Messrs. L. Cotton, Griff Collins, L. Pleasants, M. Coppage, Gibbs L. Webb, and R. M. Mills

Mrs. Frances Albrier, President.
Mrs. Ida Pleasants, Secretary
Mrs. Bertha Collins, Secretary

Mrs. M. Marshall, Vice-Pres.
Mr. James Gibbs, Vice-Pres.

Albrier: had done their share. But we needed citizens to go out into the communities and to meet these people, to educate these people, and to help them to become good citizens, and to advocate better living for them, and to speak for them, because a great many of them didn't know how to speak.

They didn't know anything about politics or anything. All they knew was being a good citizen; work if you can get a job, work and go to church. They needed to be instructed how to join other clubs; how to join community clubs and how those clubs would elevate them, and to be concerned, themselves.

That was the beginning of this Little Citizens Study and Welfare Club. A group of us met at that time and I discussed those things with them. I named it Little Citizens. When they asked me why, I said well, little citizens are the majority. Abraham Lincoln said that God must love little citizens because he made so many of them. We were the ones who advocated, in our meetings, that we should save good clothing; we should share food. If we were putting up jellies, jams and fruits, to put up extra jars, so we could give it away in baskets to citizens who needed it. Or in churches. If we had a good coat we didn't want, we cleaned that coat and put it away, so we could give it to somebody who needed it, and to help each other.

We had our own entertainment. We had our own lectures--people to come and lecture and inform us on different things. A great many of those citizens had never had that before. They felt very elated and proud that somebody would feel honored enough to come to them, to tell them about different issues and things. Along with it, the responsibility of being a good citizen, was to be a voter; to take a part in the government. It was really kind of a school, or club, or organization that puts its arms around a bunch of citizens that need to be informed and sends them out into the community.

Chall: How did you get these people? Actually, where did you hold your meetings where others would come to speak?

Albrier: We held meetings in our homes. We would meet in the school recreation centers that were open, in the parks, or those centers that were open for public meetings. A great many of our meetings were held in homes. We held teas in our homes. I held any number of meetings here. In the beginning, we met in our homes, because we would meet in the communities where the people were. They would come to the homes--feel more free than going to a public meeting, unless it was some big speaker or issue that came up that they were interested in.

Chall: So you had to find the people whom you felt needed this kind of help and induce them to come to your home or to a meeting.

Albrier: I knew any number of the people because they were referred to me by social workers in the welfare department. They would know of these cases they felt merited some help and education. They would refer them to the Little Citizens. It didn't take them long to find out that there was a group interested in doing such activities, by having such activities in a community to help people.

Chall: Did the work of getting the meetings established and deciding the speakers and all that, was that done primarily by you and Mrs. Pleasant and Margaret Marshall, or did you have some others who helped you out with this?

Albrier: We had others. I'd have to look up their names. One of the things that the Little Citizens Study and Welfare Club did: It was proposed by one of the members that every month, we have a Go-To-Church-Sunday. We would choose the church. Sometimes it was a member's church. They would get in touch with the pastor and ask if we could worship with them at that church on that Sunday. When we did, the pastor would always ask that I speak. I would tell the people about the Little Citizens Study and Welfare Club and what we were doing--that we wanted them to join. We wanted them to come to us if they felt the need of being informed on anything.

Then I would always end up about their behavior, coming West, that they'd have to drop some of the attitudes they had in themselves. A great many were from the country, and we would inform them about their attitude going into stores, trying on clothing--not to do that if they come from work. Dress up and go and try on clothing--clean and nice. All of those tiny things that we felt they should know and there wasn't anybody to teach them. And we got great response from the churches and pastors by doing that.

[end tape 5, side 2]

[Interview 6: January 16, 1978]
[begin tape 6, side 1]

Chall: I wanted to finish up a little bit, before we go into the subject of politics today, with Little Citizens Study and Welfare Club. I think you told me last week that some people felt that they were little citizens; they were not big citizens and they didn't know why you didn't let them join. Is that right? [Laughs]

Albrier: Yes. A great many professionals said that they were little citizens, also. They were not big citizens; they were little citizens also.

Chall: And they wanted to come in and join?

Albrier: They wanted to join with the little citizens.

Chall: Did you have a restriction on membership? Could anybody join?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Anybody could. The professionals could, too?

Albrier: Yes, if they wished to.

Chall: What did it cost to join? Was there a fee?

Albrier: The joining fee was, I think, three dollars a year, and fifty cents a month dues.

Chall: Did you find that your work in integrating all these new Southern citizens in the community and helping them to understand the community was effective?

Albrier: It was very important that something like that be done. That's why the professionals wanted to join the Little Citizens, so they could come in contact with these different people and study, themselves, how they could help them in their different vocations. For instance, we had several doctors and any number of labor people--the different professions joined through the membership. The membership requested them to join. That way, they helped build up the community and helped build up their different professions. Besides it was educational for a great many of them because a great many of the westerners had never lived South.

Chall: So they learned from each other?

Did the Southern blacks who came into the community--were you able to make them feel part of the community and change some of their habits so they were accepted, particularly in the white community where you wanted them to find jobs?

Albrier: Most of them were eager to learn and to adjust themselves. They were very happy that they found people who were friendly enough that they could ask all kinds of personal questions and not feel embarrassed, which they did with a great many of the members.

Albrier: They didn't do it all the time at meetings, but they would meet other members. That's where the professionals were very good for us and did so much work for us. Many of them would choose an attorney, they would choose a plumber or a carpenter who had been out here many years, and who perhaps came from their state. They came out at an early age with their parents. They could confide in them and not feel embarrassed. Before, they felt embarrassed.

Chall: So you were really bridging a gulf?

Albrier: Many times, we would have that in discussions--questions and things we thought were embarrassing--and English. A great many of them used dialect English and were laughed at. The parents were embarrassed and they knew their children were. They were eager to rectify that so they could be able to help their children.

Chall: There were really problems that most of us don't consider, don't think about, unless we know.

Did you gain leadership, ultimately, from some of those people in the community--community leadership or political leadership? Did any of them come in to the leadership group in the Berkeley community?

Albrier: Yes, they did. During the campaigns and during the Depression, you were able to get people's ear. Everybody needed jobs; everybody was handicapped in not being employed and not having money. They didn't know what was what. Then came WPA and NYA with its guidelines. A great many of them did not understand all of those guidelines that were here.

Chall: I see. We're now talking about post-war influx. There was unemployment after the war, too.

Albrier: These were people who were here before the war. They had not taken part in any politics. They knew they had a governor and knew about the president. In fact, it's very fashionable, even today, that people will vote for the president and not vote again until the next presidential term. Because it's popular to vote for the president.

They don't care who's the governor, or who is the mayor--at that time, they didn't. They just said, "Well, people who know about those things, go on and vote." They would all probably do the same thing and they all feel about the poor people the same way--and the black people the same way. That was their idea. Through Little Citizens, we were able to educate them on what politics was, and their participation, and what their vote meant, and what going to meetings meant.

Chall: I see. And I suppose many of the black people from the South hadn't voted ever. I mean, they hadn't been allowed to, many of them, so they didn't know that, either.

Albrier: The Little Citizens Club, during the war years, educated those who were going back South, also, and encouraged them to go back and vote. After that, it was quite a change throughout the South, because different people from the southern states had traveled not only to California, but to the northern states as well, to work in the war crafts, shipyards, and places like that. They went back and they knew that they could vote.

In some of the states, they had to own land or pay a poll tax. We encouraged them to pay the poll tax. Through the paying of the poll tax and voting, we'll be able to abolish the poll tax --which happened.

Chall: I hadn't realized the importance of encouraging people, who were going back, to become aware of their opportunities.

Albrier: That's why I said that was one of the benefits of a war. War educates people; it brings people from--I say, the bowels of the earth--because a great many of these people came from deep Mississippi, Georgia and Louisiana, off of plantations where they were just miles from a railroad station. But they heard of employment, and they made up their minds they wanted to change their lives and better them. Besides the large cities. And they came West and went North to get into this employment, and to make some money.

Chall: I see; then they went back.

Albrier: Otherwise, if we hadn't had a war, those people would have been where they were.

Chall: So that was the intent of your club.

Albrier: But I don't think we were as effective and as able to do the things and accomplish the things for people that we did do, until after the war, for the people who remained.

Chall: I noticed--at least your scrapbook indicates most of the activity was after 1945.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: But you had started earlier?

Albrier: For a while, during the war period, we didn't have many meetings because everybody was employed. I was myself.

Chall: That would make a difference, too.

Albrier: After the war, we started the meetings over again, because we saw a greater need for the Little Citizens. That's the reason why we said Little Citizen, in order to encourage people to join where they could get companionship and begin to know each other. We could talk, face to face, about issues.

Chall: How did--you may have told me last week, and I've forgotten--this was organized by you and Ida Pleasant and Mrs. Marshall. Just three women sitting around--

Albrier: No. Mrs. Marshall--Well, Mr. Pleasant was in it--

Chall: But you were the officers.

Albrier: I've been trying to find the list of the officers. We had other men in, but I'll have to find their names and fill it in.

Chall: So this wasn't a women's group as such?

Albrier: No. We first started out with about eight or nine members. It was through just a discussion. We were talking about the needs and what we should do for our people. We knew they should become aware of a great many things, and that they were embarrassed.

Everyone in the club were church people--belonged to different churches. Mr. and Mrs. Pleasant, a lot of them, belonged to the Baptist church. I belonged to the Methodist church. We felt that the churches were not coming out or they felt they couldn't come out and do the things that we felt should be done and needed community organization. We would use our churches, so that's why we got the program of going to the church--some church--some of the members' church. A member would request their pastor to invite or let us come to church one Sunday morning. I was to speak and tell about the club, its objectives and what we were doing to help people. That way, we won other churches and we won other members in the churches. The church we went to--a member of Little Citizens was a member of that church.

Chall: That's always a good entrance. So, eventually, I suppose, the club--you all felt you didn't need the organization as such any longer and it disbanded like some other groups do, in time?

Albrier: It just disbanded. A great many of the members became busy. Some of them moved away; some went back home. Others who lived here, became busy with other things. We quietly just disbanded.

Chall: It serves its purpose at the time. Then something else comes along.

V A HALF-CENTURY OF POLITICAL ACTION, 1932-1978

Chall: Now I wanted to get into your area of political action. I realized when I was looking at my notes that you were doing a number of other things at the same time, but we'll just work today on politics. Initially, I noticed from some--I guess it was a press release--that your activity in politics had begun in 1932. I wondered whether that was with the Democratic party or the Republican party.

Albrier: Democratic party.

Chall: Had you been a Republican, a registered Republican, ever, before you became active in the Democratic party?

Albrier: I registered in the Democratic party, I think, in 1936. My registration is in the book. [scrapbook] Before then, I was a Republican, but I wasn't active--I voted Republican.

Chall: Before 1932, then, you voted Republican?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Until 1936, you were a registered Republican?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: That means that you came in with Franklin Roosevelt.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Where you came from, your grandmother and--

Albrier: They were all Republicans. My father never changed his registration. A great many of the black people, the older ones, never changed their registration, especially those from the South. But they would vote Democratic at times for an individual or president. They felt more allied to the Republicans--

Chall: The party of Lincoln.

Albrier: Yes--than they did the Democrat.

Chall: The Depression changed all that, I guess.

Albrier: Yes. And the younger generations who came up in the later years.

The Alameda County Democratic Central Committee: The First Woman Elected, 1938

Chall: In 1938, you became a candidate for the Democratic party, the Alameda County Democratic Central Committee, at the request of the Federation for Political Unity of Labor's Non-Partisan League. Is that correct?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: You ran on something called the Progressive Democratic Slate, which is interesting, because people hardly ever run on anything for the Democratic Central Committee. And you ran with Raymond Barry--

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: --C.C. Cook, Elizabeth Graham, and U.S. Johnson. I don't have any material on this from your scrapbook from '38 until about '48, so I don't know whether any of them were elected except you.

Albrier: They were all elected: Albrier, Barry, Cook--who were the others?

Chall: Elizabeth Graham. No, she couldn't have been because you were the first woman. And U.S. Johnson--

Albrier: No, Mrs. Graham wasn't elected.

Chall: But Barry was?

Albrier: And Dellums.

Chall: Dellums was elected?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: C.L. Dellums. He wasn't part of that Progressive Democratic Slate, was he?

Albrier: No.

Chall: Raymond Barry was elected. Was he black?

Albrier: No.

Chall: And C.C. Cook?

Albrier: Dellums and I were the only blacks, and we were members of Labor's Non-Partisan League.

Chall: How did it happen?

Albrier: We were members in different districts. He was in the West Oakland district. I think that was the Seventeenth Assembly District at that time and Berkeley was the eighteenth district.

Chall: The Non-Partisan League was picking up people whom they wanted from each--to try to get into each district?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Now, what did it mean to be the Progressive Democratic Slate?

Albrier: In Labor's Non-Partisan League, in the Eighteenth Assembly District of Labor's Non-Partisan League, we had a Progressive Democratic Slate--we were progressive because our ideas were different than some of the others that were running. For instance, we were supporting Roosevelt and his ideas, and supporting labor, the working people.

Chall: And Olson? Culbert Olson?

Albrier: He was running for governor. And we were supporting Downey. Olson as governor, and Patterson as lieutenant governor, and Sheridan Downey as Senator.

Chall: That was a pretty progressive slate, in those days. How did it happen, do you think, that the Non-Partisan League picked you? Well, they actually picked two women in an area that was usually a man's sphere. But they were willing to run you and Elizabeth Graham --they didn't have to. Who was Elizabeth Graham to the Non-Partisan League?

Albrier: Elizabeth Graham was one of the club women. She belonged to the Berkeley City Club, I think. She was active in the party and agreed with the ideas of the party. She was a very broad-minded person. She wanted to see the black people in the community get

Albrier: better understanding, and end discrimination, and she felt that labor should organize and people should get adequate wages. So she fitted in with the Progressive Slate.

Chall: But you and Raymond P. Barry won in this district, and C.C. Cook.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Who was Raymond Barry at that time?

Albrier: He was just a citizen, an active citizen in the league.

Chall: And C.C. Cook?

Albrier: C.C. Cook was also.

Chall: The fact that the three of you were elected means that you--

Albrier: But we were all members of the Labor's Non-Partisan League.

Chall: You were well enough known in the community to be chosen and expected to win.

Albrier: The Labor's Non-Partisan League had an election for people who were going to run, or who they'd choose to run. Some wanted to run on their own. I ran by request. They requested that I should run. At that time, they figured out that we would win because my name was on the ballot first, as A.

Chall: That's right--that does help. [Laughs]

Albrier: It was alphabetical, you see, and Raymond Barry was B. And Mr. Cook was C. [Laughter] By the time people voted the ballot, by the time they got down to the central committee, they didn't bother about the central committee, because a great many people didn't know the activities of a central committee in a party then. So they just voted straight down the line. One, two, three, four, five, and the first three or four would be elected.

Chall: So you had a double advantage: One, you were well known, and secondly, your name was Albrier, so you were at the top. That was pretty clever thinking. And Dellums won in his district. When you got on, how did it seem?

Albrier: No. Dellums was from the same district.

Chall: Was he?

Certificate of Election

To Member County Central Committee

(By BOARD OF CANVASSERS.)

(Section 23, Direct Primary Law)

Office of County Clerk,

County of Alameda

This is to Certify *that* Frances M.Albrier

was elected to the office of Member of County Central Committee for the 18th Assembly *District by the* Democratic *party at the primary election held in the above named county on the* 30th *day of August, 19* 38.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, *the Board of Supervisors of said County has caused this official certificate of election to be issued and its seal affixed thereto this* 10th *day of* September, *19* 38, *by its clerk thereunto duly authorized.*

(*Seal*)

County Clerk and Ex-Officio Clerk of said Board of Supervisors.

By ..... *Deputy.*

Form No. 436—(1930)—CO. CLERK'S CERT. OF ELECTION—Member Co. Central Com.
Approved by the Secretary of State and the Attorney General.

A. CARLISLE & CO., UPHAM & RUTLEDGE, INC., S. F.

Albrier: Yes. He was well known in the community and labor due to his activities with the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters organized by Philip Randolph.

Albrier: It extended down to where he lived. I think he lived in North Oakland. He was in the Eighteenth Assembly District.

Chall: And you were in the eighteenth.

Albrier: We lost the eighteenth in the next five years because of population.

Chall: Did Dellums run on his own? He wasn't part of that slate from the Non-Partisan League. I'm assuming that he must have decided to run on his own.

Albrier: He ran on his own, with another slate. I just remembered that he and I were the only blacks who were elected. I don't know if other blacks ran because they weren't interested. By our being in with labor and interested in labor and labor's policies, we knew that they must go into politics in order to get legislation for the working person. That was the reason that drew us in.

Chall: Your decision to be active in politics was to get, presumably, right into the policy-making centers.

Albrier: Yes. Especially in the communities.

Chall: Generally speaking, the county central committees are not considered areas of policy making, or power, or anything. Were they?

Albrier: Yes, the county central committee directs the policies of the party in that county.

Chall: How strongly?

Albrier: They are responsible for the election of the party's candidates. Choosing them.

Chall: That's the way it is on paper, but I remember when I talked to Clara Shirpser about the time [1950] when she was running for the assembly, and she told me her experience of going to the county central committee for some assistance. They just really gave her none--no help whatsoever.

Albrier: Maybe they didn't want to. [Laughs] She may have had some ideas or had some principles she thought about the party that they didn't like, and they just disqualified her. They do that by vote. A great many people, then, go out and run on their own and they're elected and then the party has to accept them.

Chall: So it isn't a question of their not really functioning. But she was the only Democratic candidate in that primary race.

Albrier: They may have asked her certain questions. What do you know about labor and labor's needs? And, have you ever been active in any labor organization? What do you know about black people, and their needs, and what they're thinking? If you go back to the Democratic party convention, will you lobby against discrimination against black people in voting?

A great many of them reneged because they had Southern white friends who might not like it. A few in the organization whose policies are for labor and for black people and who are working towards that goal--they'll disqualify you if they think you are not. But still, you can go on and be elected by your friends. A great many people were. They learned later.

Clara Shirpser came over on the side where the people were who had these different policies. She was not as independent a candidate as she was when she first ran. She became a very liberal candidate after the first two terms she served. [1952-1956]

Chall: On the central committee.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: I suspect that people didn't really know where she was because she came up so suddenly. You really feel, then, that the county central committee can be an important factor in elections?

Albrier: The county central committee <u>is</u> an important organization in elections. Because the five who are elected from the county central committee are responsible that the candidates of their party that's running, get elected in their districts. They are to inform the people, conduct meetings on the principles of the party and those who are elected, from the governor on down. I should say the president on down.

Chall: In your Eighteenth Assembly District--were you more active than, let's say, some of the central committee members from other districts? Did you take your responsibilities more seriously? Do you think that you and Dellums and some of the others worked harder?

Albrier: I think all the committee members who were elected in those days were serious. The Democratic party took a change under Roosevelt and Farley and those types of men who were coming out, visiting and speaking with us and educating us, in order to build a new Democratic party.

Some Recollections of Party Activity

Chall: How was the reception in 1938 to two black persons in this white domain, and to a woman who'd never cracked that community of politicians before? How were you received?

Albrier: I was scared to death when I was elected and attended the first central committee meeting. The majority of those members were attorneys. I didn't know too much about the central committee and what it was to do, so I sat and didn't say anything for about half the term, and listened.

Chall: [Laughs] That's all right--you were learning.

Albrier: I just listened and learned. Then I went to UC [University of California] and took a course in political science, so I could be up to date.

Chall: [Laughs] They let you in to take a class here?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Do you remember whose class it was?

Albrier: No, I don't remember. It was an extension course. I forget who the instructor was.

Chall: Very smart. Did he know very much about the central committee? [Laughs] I would guess most professors don't know much about it either.

Albrier: The members were very nice. The people I worked with. Some of them were--not many--but some of them were as new as I was. We all were learning together. Of course, at that time, the Democratic party, under President Roosevelt, had classes and gave out so much literature that they sent you to read and to learn; to get you acquainted with, and organized. The first four years were really a learning process from 1936 to 1938. By '38, they had a lot of data and books of instructions. They had key people in each state and in the counties to instruct all the new people who were coming into the party and into offices.

Chall: Instruct them on what their responsibilities were and how to organize?

Albrier: Yes, politics.

Chall: That was coming out of the Democratic National Committee offices?

Albrier: The national Democratic committee. I remember meeting, several times, Mr. Farley--his name was Jim Farley--he would come out and we would all attend his lectures. I was amazed at him knowing everybody's name.

Chall: [Laughs] Yes, he's given great credit for that, isn't he? He always was.

Albrier: He'd look over and say, "Frances Albrier--" I'd be startled. He instructed us on the value of remembering people's names. They'd feel closer to you and feel you were interested in them by remembering their names. So, he tried to remember everybody's name. He had such a wonderful memory over the rest of us.

Chall: Yes, he must have.

Albrier: Because I'd hear him call people's names. He'd been gone out of the state for months and come back and would call people's names. They'd come up. "How are you?" And he'd address them by name. He said it had a charm to it.

Chall: I'm sure! It must have been just great.

Albrier: If we wanted to be successful politicians [he told us] we must take enough time to remember people and, above all, remember their names. [Laughter]

Chall: How are you at it? You're not answering--[Laughter]

Albrier: I had to be very good at it, but I've lost it now. My memory isn't as acute as it was then. I developed a good memory.

Chall: It's training, isn't it?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: In 1938 you were the manager of the East Bay campaign headquarters for Olson, Brown, Patterson, Roosevelt, that whole group that was running at the time. Was that a paid position at headquarters or volunteer?

Albrier: Volunteer. The party didn't have any money. In fact, you had to put money in it. They didn't have any money to pay people at the time. That was the responsibility of the central committee. It was the Depression years. Citizens became interested in government; what the president was proposing for their welfare. There were many volunteers to help run the headquarters.

Chall: Did you enjoy that?

Albrier: Yes, I did. Very much. I enjoyed working with the people. Everyone was interested. It was easy, at that time, to call a meeting for something very important because people were not employed and were disturbed, and they would come to meetings to see what it was all about.

Chall: In 1940, you were asked to serve--let's see, you were made a delegate to the state central committee meeting to represent the Eighteenth Assembly District. Is that the only time that you ever were a delegate to the state central committee?

Albrier: No, I was a delegate to the state central committee many times. There was only one time that I was to be there in place of an assemblyman of the district--

Chall: That was in 1940--

Albrier: --that was to represent the assembly district. That was because we lost our assemblyman in the district to a Republican.

Chall: I see--you'd had one.

Albrier: The party in this district, Alameda County voted that I should represent the Eighteenth. I think it was still the Eighteenth Assembly District.

Chall: Yes, it was.

Albrier: --as assemblyman.

[Interrupted by doorbell]

Chall: Can you recollect your first central committee meeting? I mean the Democratic State Central Committee meeting. Was that a puzzling meeting to you?

Albrier: The first--

Chall: Yes, your first state central committee meeting. Was that the first time you had been there, in 1940, when you were going in place of the assemblyman?

Albrier: No, I had been to the state before then.

Chall: Who appointed you?

Albrier: I attended the state committee when Olson was running for governor. [1938]

Chall: Didn't you have to go as an appointee of somebody? To be a member? I guess you could go and watch--but to be a member of the state central committee.

Albrier: To be a member of the state central committee, you are selected from the county division where you're from, like Alameda County. Then the different assemblymen and state senators appoint you. I forget who appointed me.

Chall: I see. But you were appointed at the time.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: How did you work in those meetings? Northern California would caucus by itself, wouldn't it?

Albrier: Yes. Under the party system, they had the two divisions: North and South. Each one would take its turn in selecting and nominating the state chairman and officers. One year the southern district would select; the next year, the northern district would select their officers. When you'd go to the state convention, I mean committee--you were usually caucusing all the time with your group and with other groups in selecting people.

Chall: Did you find that to be sometimes--those election campaigns for the offices--rather bitter and difficult?

Albrier: Oh yes, it was another campaign altogether, again. It was very interesting, the different people. Different members would have different ideas and different campaign literature. Naturally, they were appealing to the district they came from and where they lived, and their interest in the party nationally, state and county.

Chall: I don't know which years you went to the state central committee, so I can't offhand recall some of the most bitter controversies, but there was one, I understand, sometime in the--I guess the mid-fifties, about 1958 or so, between David Freidenrich and Byron Rumford over who was going to be elected secretary? Were you in the committee at that time?

Albrier: I wasn't as active at that time. I was active more in the early years, the Depression and war years.

Chall: Those were the periods when William Malone was--

Albrier: William Malone was state chairman.

Chall: State chairman, I see. It was a rather small group then.

Albrier: I was active when he was state chairman.

Chall: Okay. I know those years. Helen Gahagan Douglas was vice-chairman. [1941-1944]

Albrier: Vice-chairman of the women's division. Later, they elected her as--was she Senator?

Chall: To Congress. [1944-1950]

Albrier: Yes, she was elected to Congress.

Chall: It was when she was running for the Senate, against Richard Nixon, that she failed in 1950.

The Place of Women in the Party Structure: A Loss of Independence

Albrier: It was Helen Gahagan Douglas who encouraged me to organize a club, a political club, of women.

Chall: Of women?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: What club did that turn out to be?

Albrier: I didn't organize a club as she said. I became a part of a club--I joined a club. I joined the East Bay Women's Democratic Study Club. That was a club that studied politics and had classes for women who didn't understand, besides encouraging women to join the party.

Chall: Is that the one you became president of in '67?

Albrier: Yes, later.

Chall: I've seen it as both the East Bay and Alameda County Democratic Women's Study Club. Maybe it started out as one and became the other.

Albrier: It is the Alameda County Democratic Women's Study Club. It takes in women in Alameda County.*

Chall: So that's the one you joined. Did you ever do much with the women's division? Were you ever active in any state women's division--projects?

Albrier: I was active when Helen Gahagan Douglas was chairman. Then later, too, I was active because I was a member of the state committee and a member of the county committee, also.

Chall: What is your general opinion of the separation of women in party politics from men? Like the women's division or the women's study clubs. Is it a good idea?

Albrier: At the time I became active in the women's division, we were interested in organizing many study clubs, many Democratic women's clubs, throughout the state. We had our own conference, Women's Democratic Conference, where we women got together. We had our officers, presidents, like regular officers at a convention and state officers.

Then we discussed the problems of women and youth; how we could remedy these problems or improve the women as politicians in the party. One of the main reasons was, we knew in the future there would be women who would become candidates, and it was to back women, and to help women become candidates, and win in the party that we built up those clubs. We felt that women had been kept back and had no encouragement. Unless women backed women, they would not get any place in the party or in politics.

Chall: As long ago as before World War II, then,--and after--in the mid-forties, you were talking about this inside the women's clubs, the party clubs?

Albrier: Yes. We also won many friends to our cause with the men. In the county central committee, it was men who nominated me to be secretary.

Chall: In 1956, that was.

Albrier: Yes.

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*In the San Francisco Bay Area, cities in Alameda County are denoted as being in the East Bay.

Chall: Prior to that, you had a term or so as vice-chairman.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: I guess that was the place for women, being vice-chairman, often. Did the men in the central committee--that's the Alameda County Central Committee--when they were planning campaigns, maybe making some decision about candidates and things of this kind--did they take the women into their groups? Did they sort of include them in or exclude them?

Albrier: They had to include them, because they were a part of the party--a definite part of the party, and voters. They controlled so many votes. One thing that the party did was detrimental to the Democratic party women--and it is to this day. When I first went in and became active, the women had a women's Democratic Federation where they had their own organized conventions and they had the candidates and elected officers appear before them, and ask them questions, and they would endorse candidates themselves.

Chall: This was at the state level or the county level?

Albrier: This was at the state level--and the county. Afterwards, they set up a policy to have a women's division in the party.

[end tape 6, side 1; begin tape 6, side 2]

Chall: You were explaining that at one time, when you first came in, the women in the state central committee had their own conventions. They were separate conventions and they could assess candidates as well as the men did. Is that it? Separately.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Then what happened?

Albrier: They were more independent. Then the state set up a women's division, which kind of separated the women. They didn't do it intentionally. The women had fought to have <u>equal</u> representation --where a senator [or assemblyman] would appoint two women and one man each.

Chall: One beside himself.

Albrier: Yes. That made it equal. Equal rights for women came in vogue at that time.

Chall: Yes. That was a special arrangement. They called it fifty percent--the 50-50--

Albrier: The 50-50.

Chall: So that changed it?

Albrier: They called that department the women's division. What it did was lessen the strength of the women who had their own conventions. The women's division of the party was influenced mostly by the men. Before then, the women would nominate and elect who they pleased--who they wanted and who they felt was the best person.

Chall: That's for their own division.

Albrier: Yes. They didn't recognize the women's clubs and the women's convention after that, and that broke up the women's conventions.

Chall: I didn't realize that. So then--

Albrier: That's what happened, because I was one who was bitterly against it because I could see the women losing their power of endorsement. And that the women's division was influenced mostly by men, elected officers and party officers. The Republican women still have their Republican Women's Federated Assembly.

Chall: Yes, the Federation of Republican Women.

Albrier: That's what we should have had, our Federation of Democratic Women. That's what we started to have. You could continually organize Democratic women into clubs, and bring them into that Federation. You had your own endorsement. When you had your convention, you endorsed people in the districts and counties whom you thought were eligible to be in that office and who were interested in women's problems, and would elevate women to office. In those years, it was a struggle for women in politics.

Chall: Now what they've done is, apparently, to give women a leadership title in the women's division, but not the power that would go with it, as much. Is that what you think has happened?

Albrier: Women had the power if they had kept that federation. What would happen, like they did in New York, the women still have their convention. They elect congressmen. If there's a woman congressman running, she has a lot of strength, if she's endorsed by that Democratic Women's Federation; not only with votes, but with money.

Chall: By putting a lot of this under the aegis of the party, it diffused the women. It gave them titles but the same clout wasn't there.

Albrier: The same clout wasn't there.

Chall: You could see that then, in your work with the Alameda County Democratic Women's Study Club.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: They didn't have the power after that that they might have had before.

Albrier: What happened--the men used the women to do the work. After that, they didn't have the power or the influence that they should have because they were scattered. You see, in some of those states where they retained women's federations, they would say to a candidate that they endorsed, "We endorsed you because we want you to make it better--create money, for instance, for child care. We're interested in having adequate child care in this state. We want you to see that adequate money is provided and provisions made to have such child care in this state. We have 20,000 votes and $10,000 at your disposal." And that person usually gets elected and he does what the women want him to do. He sees what they can do and puts every effort he can for child care. A lot of politicians never wanted to see women in that power. They're just now beginning to get there.

Chall: So this whole resurgence of the women's movement is just coming back around to almost where you tried to be a generation ago?

Albrier: That's right. I say that because we had many struggles here, politically, the women in this state. One of them was child care. When we were lobbying for child care, I remember I went up to lobby. And when we spoke as to why we should have child care in this state, one senator said, "What do you want to have that for? Won't women go to the bars and be having a good time and somebody else taking care of the children?" I remember I yelled at him and said, "Didn't you hear us say these were working women who needed child care? They are not women who attend the bars. It's only women who have money who attend the bars and don't have anything else to do. But these are working women!" [Laughter]

Chall: I guess you can tell the same story just so many times before you become irritated?

Albrier: That's right.

Chall: It took a long time before you got your child care bill through, didn't it?

Albrier: Yes, it did. They looked at it as leisure. Women wanted leisure and wanted to place their children somewhere while they go and have teas, parties, and good times around the bars. They didn't realize we were beginning, in California, having a large population of women who were employed.

Chall: And because they had to be.

Albrier: That's right. And were contributing to the welfare of their children and their families.

Berkeley Democratic Party Leaders and Policies

Chall: It's never been really recognized, that segment of our population. For many years, Monroe Friedman was the --

Albrier: Chairman of the Alameda County Democratic Central Committee.

Chall: He's now a judge or--

Albrier: Yes, he's a retired judge.

Chall: Was he, in your estimation, an effective chairman of the party here?

Albrier: Yes, he was a very good chairman. It was under his administration that Byron Rumford came up for election and was elected. [1948 to the state assembly]

Chall: Did the central committee help when Byron Rumford was running? That was rather a major step for a black person and I know the black community certainly would get behind him, but I was wondering about the committee.

Albrier: Yes, the central committee put all its strength behind his campaign. For any number of years, black people had run. There was attorney Henderson and attorney Jay Maurice at one time. I think they ran twice. Several others ran.

Chall: For assembly.

Albrier: For the assembly. Several whites ran in the Seventeenth Assembly District for the assembly. They were not elected. Usually, a Republican was elected in that district.

Chall: So they did really help in his campaign--Rumford's?

Albrier: The year that Byron Rumford ran, I was proposed to be the most eligible candidate who had had the most activity in the Democratic party. Some other candidates came up, so I suggested we form a committee, have a meeting, and the people choose who they would want to run. We had that committee and people met at Bebe Memorial Church.

Chall: That was in 1948?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: When Rumford first ran?

Albrier: Yes. There were three of us--Byron Rumford, myself, and someone else in the district. Anyway, each of us talked and gave our ideas, politics, why we wanted to run, and what we wanted to do in the district or see that was done in the district. A meeting was called of voters in the district and an election was held. Byron got the most votes. We decided to get in behind Byron. That would cut out any other persons who would decide to run. At that time, we just had Byron running in the district.

Chall: That certainly made it much easier.

Albrier: Yes. To be elected.

Chall: I understand that in making the decision to have the meeting and make sure that only one black candidate ran--that D.G. Gibson was behind it.

Albrier: D.G. Gibson?

Chall: Behind some of that strategy. Was that right?

Albrier: He wasn't behind that strategy, but he came in behind Byron Rumford and became his campaign manager at that time.

Chall: Had D.G. Gibson been active in the community?

Albrier: Yes, he had been active in the community organization clubs. He was then becoming a businessman. Before then, he was a railroad man.

Chall: A porter, wasn't he?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: The two of you, from what I can gather, followed somewhat the same kind of path; that is, you were active in women's clubs and quite concerned about raising the level of the black people in your community. From what I gather, he was active in clubs, too, with the same motivation.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: And you were both very active in the Democratic club and party. I wondered at what point your paths might have crossed. I mean you went along in the same direction but at some point you might not have agreed with one another. Generally, were you in agreement working together?

Albrier: We went along in the same direction. Afterwards, I kind of withdrew from being really active in politics. I let them take over and I withdrew, for a while.

Chall: Did you withdraw because you wanted to or because the men were getting much stronger?

Albrier: Because I wanted to. I became more interested in the women's organization outside of politics.

Chall: That would have been, when? You stayed on the central committee until about 1962.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Were you active in politics--well, I guess you were until that time.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: In fact, if you became president of the Alameda County Democratic Women's Study Club, you must have stayed active until about 1970, or '68 at least.

Albrier: I think so.

Chall: Partially active?

Albrier: I think I was. I mean I wasn't as active as I was when I was on the central committee because the central committee included the five assembly districts. For instance, a person should be

Albrier: very well aware and acquainted with the Berkeley area in the district; in the West Oakland area in the district, and the North Oakland area in the district.

Chall: It was a large district.

Albrier: Yes, yes. And know the needs of the people, and listen to them to see if you could help them politically. It was quite a responsibility.

Chall: So you did that. You became sort of roving listener for the party?

Albrier: Yes. Besides the meetings.

Chall: Did Mr. Gibson work well with politically active women like you? How, in fact, did the black male leaders accept and work with the black women leaders, as the men came into more political prominence?

Albrier: When Mr. Gibson and Rumford came in, we older ones were in ahead of them; had paved the way and opened many doors for women. When Mr. Rumford came in--was elected--quite a few young women became active in politics and in the party. That was one reason why I became not as active as I had been and let them take over, because they had new ideas. It was a different time and a different administration. They seem to have taken on in some ways that took longer for them. Many of them were interested in their own selves, and jobs, positions. When you become interested in yourself, you lose the contact with people and people lose their respect for you.

Chall: You're talking about women?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: The women, I see. What were they interested in? Political jobs, political titles?

Albrier: Yes. Political jobs and titles. Those who went on the central committee--I know one was interested in cosmetology and being on the cosmetology board. Appointments to the boards and committees.

Chall: Women went into politics the way some men are seen as going into it, as a step up?

Albrier: That's right. A great many of them went into it at that time. A great many of the black people were disappointed because they thought that Mr. Rumford could get them in these jobs. They weren't

Albrier: very well aware that he couldn't. He might recommend them, but that was as far as he could go.

The educational process in politics, and why you should be a good Democrat, and why you should keep up with the party and vote for the party, and expect your candidates to live up to their requirements, and live up to their promises, is through your vote and not what you might get out of it. You get so much out of it by seeing that they do what they should do in legislation. That type of education had to--still has to be done in the public and in the communities. A great many people said to me, and my own family said to me, "You work so hard in that party and spend so much money on that party. What do you get out of it?"

Chall: How many people worked in the party for just the goals that you've mentioned without wanting anything for themselves? Let's say those early central committee members, the men. How many of them were in there, not to be judges and not to get contracts, but because they wanted their candidates to live up to certain principles?

Albrier: There weren't too many of them. They were in there for some particular reason. They were for themselves or their children or relatives. Then there was a group, and my group was in it for all the people and for the masses of young people, following.

Concern for Black People, Especially Women

Chall: Your group, meaning the blacks?

Albrier: For instance, when I worked in the party, there were no black clerks in the Department of Motor Vehicles [in Berkeley or other cities]. I forget who took over that department. When they did, this man said to me, "Mrs. Albrier, I hired three young black women as clerks today in the Motor Vehicle Department in Berkeley. I know you will be pleased because that's what you've been talking about." I told him that I was very pleased and thanked him very much because that's what I was doing it for. I had children who were coming up and in school and I did not want them to be turned down and have it said they could not have a position because they didn't hire a black girl, or hire blacks.

Chall: You were in there to change the rules of the game so that the blacks had an entre into American society by law, through the system?

Albrier: Yes. I knew a long time ago. People like Mary McLeod Bethune who I knew very well, and other women of that type, and the teachers--those in Tuskegee and Howard--instilled in us older ones that we would not get what we thought we would get. We would not get any positions that we were entitled to, but we must struggle and work to place the other younger ones behind in those positions; open those doors. And it would take time; so we'd have to have the patience. I have lived to see the things that I've worked for come to pass today, because I never thought I'd see so many young black women in positions that I see them in today.

Chall: You were not only trying to raise the level of blacks in general, but you've always had a feeling about raising the level of black women, haven't you? Women were important to you.

Albrier: They were very important to me because they seemed to be the downcast more than the men. If the men had super strength, they would get there, but the woman with super strength, didn't.

Chall: I see.

Albrier: Just because she was a woman.

Chall: As Shirley Chisholm says, it's more difficult to be a woman and more so to be black and a woman.

Albrier: That's right.

Chall: I'm not sure that I got your point. In the late fifties, then, you said when the administration changed, then you began to go out of party activities. Does that mean when Kennedy came in, in that administration, or which administration changed? Do you mean at that time you began to let the younger people take over?

Albrier: I didn't run for the central committee. I wasn't a committeeman or a state committeeman anymore, where I was very close with the party. I was only in the club. I retained my membership in the Democratic Women's clubs. We were interested, especially, in women and getting women out and registered. We were responsible to get women out to vote and get out the vote for the party, which was always a big job. That was left mostly to women because the men were employed and women had to run the campaign offices and help to get the men elected during the election time.

Chall: But as far as taking a strong hand in policy inside the party, you must have dropped out about the early sixties, I take it.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: That was when Lyndon Johnson came in, and I guess the movement changed--the black movement became more militant, too.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: There's some change taking place that we probably will identify more closely at another time. I've taken off some of the letterheads of the Alameda County Democratic Central Committee, the names of some of the women who were on the committee like Minnie Lou Eakin, Lennah Labadie, Claudia Zumwalt, and you. That was a small group. There were never too many women, but there were always a few. After you, there were always a few.

Albrier: I worked a long time with those women.

Chall: Minnie Lou Eakin was from the Seventeenth Assembly District. None of these women were black, except you, were they?

Albrier: No, they were all white.

Chall: In 1948, Ruby Hall came in and was elected secretary. Was she black?

Albrier: No. Secretary of the central committee?

Chall: Yes. Still we had only two blacks in 1948. Rumford and Albrier. In 1950 Tarea Pittman was elected and became vice-chairman of the central committee. That was one more black.

Albrier: That's right.

Chall: Was her reason for coming into the central committee the same as yours?

Albrier: She came in when Rumford came in as assemblyman, running for assemblyman. She became active then. Before then, she was definitely in the NAACP.

Chall: She became active in the party as a result of working with Rumford's election?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: In 1954, the Seventeenth Assembly District ran five candidates, all of whom I think, but I don't know, are black: You, and D.G. Gibson, Leo Brown, Irma Lewis, and Claude Alan. Are they all black people?

Albrier: Yes, they're all black. They weren't all elected, though.

Chall: No. The only person elected was you. You got seventy-seven votes. The next highest was Gibson with thirty-two. So you were the only one elected in that group. That was 1954, at least I think it was '54.

Albrier: I forgot that.

Chall: That shows that you were pretty popular. Of course, you were still at the top with your A.

Albrier: I ran so many years, people would look for my name on the ballot.

Chall: At least they knew one person who was running.

Albrier: And when I didn't run, they still looked for my name. Then they'd look for my name to see who I endorsed. They still do that.

Chall: Do they call you?

Albrier: Yes, they call me, or tell me they look to see who's endorsing this candidate and look to see if I've endorsed them. If I didn't, they would call and ask me about them.

Chall: That indicates you arrived in an area of leadership.

Albrier: Yes, I guess so.

Campaigns for Committee Offices

Chall: In 1956, there's still only a couple of women. Now, let's see, I'm going to ask you about the 1956 election in the central committee, in Alameda County, because apparently there was some tough election between, for chairman, Charles Russell and Laurance Cross. What was all that about?

Albrier: They were running for chairman.

Chall: Yes, but why so tough?

Albrier: There's always a lot of interest in who's to be chairman of the central committee. That's an important office. Directing the policies of the party in the state, the county chairman's the one who helps choose the state chairman.

Two letterheads and a central committee election flyer

DEMOCRATIC CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF ALAMEDA COUNTY

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Chairman	Vice-Chairman	Secretary	Treasurer	Corresponding Secretary

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Thirteenth Assembly District
Charles A. Russell
John M. Hoffman
Mrs. Marilyn Malone
Robert Fairwell
Leon McCool
Carlos Bee

Fourteenth Assembly District
S. O. Connelly
George E. McDonald
Richard P. Schacht
Mrs. Myrtle Williams
Robert E. (Bob) Sarvey
Robert W. Crown

Fifteenth Assembly District
Roy P. Mitchell
Robert H. Rose
Charles P. Murray
Carl A. Postada
Alfred Dunn
Robert B. River

Sixteenth Assembly District
Robert S. Johnson
Daniel F. Cunningham
Lorey Freeborn
George L. Rice
Sam W. Blanford
Wm. M. Freeborn
Anga Bjornson

Seventeenth Assembly District
Carl F. Dittmar
E. O. Corson
William Springer
Delmar G. Williams
Mrs. Frances Albrier
W. Byron Rumford

Eighteenth Assembly District
Elizabeth Torrey Andrews, M.D.
Winton McKibben
Hollis D. Bledsoe
Robert E. Barleau
Roberta R. Bratenahl
Dr. Jas. G. Whitney

1956-1958

ALAMEDA COUNTY DEMOCRATIC CENTRAL COMMITTEE

1946 - 1948

1445 HARRISON STREET
OAKLAND 12, CALIFORNIA
TWinoaks 4358

CHAIRMAN
Monroe Friedman

VICE-CHAIRMEN
Claudia Zumwalt
John C. Stirrat
Frances M. Albrier

DISTRICT VICE-CHAIRMEN
Fred Boxley
John H. Bittman
Lafayette H. Cerveau

SECRETARY
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Dave C. Allen
Raymond P. Barry
Tom Bolster
Robert T. Bolton
Frank F. Burke
Raymond P. Colliver
Frank V. Cornish
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Leonard Dieden
Hon. Francis Dunn
Minnie Lou Eakin
Herbert Erskine
Herman A. Hager
W. Glen Harmon
William H. Hollander
Richard T. Krom
Lennah E. Labadie
Ray Leslie
Andrew Monahan
Chas. P. Murray
John Peregoy
Charles Roe
Ivan Sperbeck

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These are your official Democratic candidates for County Central Committee:

- D. G. GIBSON
- IRMA LEWIS
- CLAUDE ALLEN
- FRANCES ALBRIER
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USE IT — TUESDAY, JUNE 8
Polls open from 7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

VOTE EARLY
VOTE DEMOCRATIC

17th Assembly District Precinct Club

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1954

Chall: That's right. On the executive board.

Albrier: And he's our delegate to all the state offices, meetings and conferences like that. Carl Dittmar, that year, ran--

Chall: He was running for secretary. You beat him for secretary. Why was that so hotly contested? You'd think nobody would want to be secretary [laughter] and keep the minutes.

Albrier: The secretary has so much prestige in the party.

Chall: That was a very close vote--seventeen to sixteen. According to the newspapers, this was the Tribune, the meeting was prolonged by parliamentary tangles and several election contests [laughter]; so you came out ahead on that one. Was Charles Russell a good chairman?

Albrier: Yes, he was. He was from the San Leandro district.

Chall: Laurance Cross had been active politically here in Berkeley for a number of years, too.

Albrier: Yes, it was the Democrats who made him mayor and they tried to send him to Congress, but he didn't quite make it.

Black Activists in the Central Committee

Chall: I saw a picture of a group of black political activists: Leo Brown, Frances Albrier, Arthur Fletcher, Lillian Potts, and Edward O. Pete Lee. What were you all representing?

Albrier: We weren't running for any office or the central committee. We were in our organization together. What was that other name? One name there you read is a Republican. He ran on the Republican ticket.

Chall: Arthur Fletcher?

Albrier: Arthur Fletcher. He came up and had a very distinguished appointment through President Nixon in the Republican party. I forget--the Department of Labor?

Chall: Yes.

Albrier: Anyway, he was the only black Republican who had run in this district. Although we were Democrats, we encouraged him because I felt that he would go places in the Republican party.

I did not discourage the blacks who ran in the Republican party. I said there's two parties and you work for what is right in your party, and I'll work for what's right in my party. We both would work to help fight against discrimination and racism in each party. So, we were friends. That's how that came about.

Chall: I think I understand that now. I saw a picture in the paper, in the Sun Reporter, and this was a sort of caucus of yours, of black officials. Was he with the Republican Central Committee?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: That's what you were--central committee people of Alameda County--not all Democrats. I'm glad to get that straightened out. In time, then, you sort of began to become more powerful among yourselves. You had enough black people to develop a sort of black caucus.

Albrier: We had enough in the population to swing anything that we wanted.

Chall: If you could be unified.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: I've seen Lillian Potts' name somewhere else, so she must have stayed active in politics.

Albrier: She stayed active in politics a good many years. She was on the Democratic Council of Clubs, and president of a Democratic club.

Chall: And Leo Brown. I've seen his name, too. He was active.

Albrier: Yes, he was active the same way.

Chall: Then a group of black people became active through the club movement, Democratic club movement, I guess. When you were the co-chairman for Alameda County campaign for Glenn Anderson for lieutenant-governor in 1958, was that working to get out the vote and organize the campaign?

Albrier: To get him elected.

Chall: Which you did along with the election for Governor Brown.

Albrier: Yes. I started with Governor [Edmund G. Sr.] Brown the beginning of his campaign. During the early years, in the 1940s, politically everything was controlled by the Republicans in both counties, San Francisco and Alameda. There were not a great number of registered Democrats in San Francisco, but there were quite a few over here. When a Democrat would run in San Francisco County we in Alameda County would go over to San Francisco County and work in his office and campaign and ring doorbells. When Governor Brown--he wasn't governor then--decided that he wanted to run for district attorney, I campaigned in the Fillmore District for him.

Chall: You mean district attorney of San Francisco. Is that right?

Albrier: Yes, district attorney. At that time, we did not have many Democrats in any of the city offices. They were all Republicans, from the district attorney on up. We would go over there because we had quite a few over here, Democrats, and help campaign to get a Democrat in that county in office. So I campaigned in the Fillmore District. That's where the black district was--the black people, for him as district attorney. Then when he became attorney general, and again when he became governor.

Chall: So you helped him with his campaigns right from the very beginning.

Albrier: From the very beginning. He came up in the party from the very beginning. That was one reason why he felt that he must do something to get an FEPC in the state of California. He owed that to the black people, who had stuck by him all the way through. And he felt it was the right move to eliminate discrimination in employment.

Chall: That's understandable.

Albrier: Malone was still the chairman at that time.

Chall: How was Malone to work with? Did you have many dealings with Malone?

Albrier: Yes, I liked him. He was a very good chairman. Some didn't approve of everything that he did in the party. He steered the way and he cleared the way for others.

Chall: Were there any black members of the central committee in San Francisco at that time that you remember? I'm not sure there were.

Albrier: I don't remember, but I remember there weren't many.

Chall: There weren't many there, so there probably weren't many on the central committee, just because there weren't many in the population, and they did have to be elected.

Albrier: No. There were a few on the state committee, though, but they were appointed.

Chall: When you would submit, as you did, in 1946, a resolution to the Alameda County Democratic Central Committee, regarding lynchings in Mississippi and Georgia--when you called on the United States government to protect its citizens and prosecute violators--how were resolutions like this received?

Albrier: I always got good response after an explanation. They were received unanimously through the party.

Chall: So in a sense, you were the conscience, sometimes, of the group. They might not have paid that much attention to it or felt concern, but you made it their concern, then. Did you and Mr. Dellums work together on anything of this kind?

Albrier: We always did, or we always agreed, because we both were working in NAACP. We were ardent NAACP members. Mr. Dellums was elected chairman of the Alameda branch of the NAACP after Walter Gordon. He served as chairman many years.

[end tape 6, side 2]

President Truman and Civil Rights Issues, 1948-1952

[Interview 7: February 7, 1978]
[begin tape 7, side 1]

Chall: What I thought we'd talk about today are about three important aspects of your political career. These have to do with some aspects of your work in national politics, the Democratic party clubs that you belonged to and in which you were an officer, and Berkeley politics.

Let's start with national politics. I noticed in your scrapbook that, in 1948, you were invited to sit on a platform with President Truman at a Lakeside Park function in Oakland and that, in 1950, you were invited to sit on a platform with Vice-President Alben Barkley at an Oakland Auditorium theater function. Then, in 1952, you were invited to meet with Harry Truman and other active supporters of civil rights in the Fairmont Hotel in the

Chall: middle of the afternoon, about 4:45. Prior to that, you were invited to a luncheon which was sponsored by the Northern California Independent Citizens Committee at the Palace Hotel at 1:00 o'clock. I have a feeling all that has to do with civil rights movements. I thought you might tell me something about that. If you want to look over those notes, they're the top four items there. Those I took out of your scrapbook; and there are probably more.

Albrier: In 1948 I was a member of the Alameda County Democratic Central Committee. When political figures came to the counties, the chairman and the central committee had the responsibility to entertain them; arrange programs and meetings for them. At that time, President Truman was running to be reelected. We had this meeting for him at Lakeside Park, so he'd be able to meet the people. He always wanted to meet the people in person, and shake hands with the people in person--as many as possible--and greet them. That's why this function was arranged at Lakeside Park for the president. But we didn't get a chance to interview him or to talk to him at any great length of time.

At that time, we were very much interested in civil rights. All through politics and all through my career in being in political organizations I realized that that was the only way that we could attain legislation, and get the influence of key people on these issues, and explain to them the predicament of the people--especially the black people. And explain what segregation and all that type of idea that pervaded the country did to citizens. It was demoralizing the young people as they came up because they were feeling that their country cared nothing about them and, therefore, they were not as interested in doing anything for the country. A great many of them had the feeling that maybe they should try some other country.

Naturally the parents didn't like to hear their youth have that type of idea. But they didn't know what to do. A great many of them who were employed in making a living for their families did not have the time to read and to study and they knew very little about politics. So those of us who were in politics had to get ourselves informed so we could explain to them, and tell them how to vote, and who to vote for, and if this person was interested in the same things that they wanted to know.

Chall: In 1948, the black people were favorable to Truman rather than, let's say, to Henry Wallace, who was also running that year on the Independent Progressive Party ticket? How did the community relate itself to that issue?

Albrier: A great many of the black people, especially the young people, favored Wallace because he seemed to be interested in--more dedicated to civil rights. President Truman came from a state that didn't have such a good record on civil rights. Wallace came up at the time when there were people who had advanced ideas about advancing the conditions of people and who wanted tp eliminate a lot of the things that he [Wallace] thought were wrong, with people--not only the black Americans but the Asians and the other American people, as well as the people throughout the world. A great deal of thought was given to Africa at the time. Persons like Mr. Wallace got the ear of pretty near all of the younger people.

Chall: He did?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Was that your community? Was this a problem that you felt?

Albrier: In a way it did split the community.

Chall: Mostly along generational lines, then?

Albrier: Yes. Alben Barkley, in 1950, came out. The party ran in debt and owed quite a bit of money for campaigns. So they had to give something and have a good speaker. Alben Barkley was that type of a speaker and because of the position that he was in--

Chall: He was the vice-president, too.

Albrier: --he would have some message of interest to tell the people and the voters. So that's why he was out here at that time. We had it in Oakland; the central committee was the platform guest. Wherever the central committee and the state committee sponsored an affair, that county committee is always the platform guest. You get a chance to meet these different people.

In 1952, when President Truman came to the Fairmont Hotel and came West, he was having, as his running mate, Senator Sparkman from Alabama. A great many of us didn't agree in supporting Senator Sparkman from Alabama.

Chall: In 1952--that's when Adlai Stevenson was running as the presidential candidate. Truman was going out of office. But you're right--Sparkman was the vice-presidential candidate and he was a southerner.

Albrier: Sparkman was running for vice-president in 1952. I'll never forget those dates. A great many of us, especially members of the NAACP and other civil rights organizations--welfare rights organizations and other organizations--felt that we couldn't support Sparkman. We didn't feel he was the person to be vice-president or to run as vice-president with Adlai Stevenson. A great many of the people just wouldn't vote. They would sit it out. A great many of the black Democrats said that they wouldn't vote with Sparkman as vice-president.

Chall: That must have been a worry to the Democratic party.

Albrier: We wrote a letter--those of us who were in politics and were members of the county committee--to the president and conveyed to him our thoughts on what the people were thinking out West. That we weren't pleased with what the Democratic convention did in choosing Sparkman. I forget who we wanted at that time.

Chall: Would it have been Estes Kefauver? He was interested.

Albrier: Yes. We felt that Estes Kefauver, although from the South, could get the ear and had more respect by the black people, the minority people, in the United States than Sparkman, because of Sparkman's record, because of the reaction of some people in his own home state that we knew.

Chall: I see. People were opposed to Sparkman all the way.

Albrier: This disturbed the president quite a bit. He knew that some of the key people in California felt as they did and that they were not going to vote. They were going to sit it out, as they call it in politics. He came West to talk to us, so he could explain to us that people in the South that run for president and vice-president were responsible to us and they were not just responsible to their constituency. A great many times, they had to vote and do what their constituents said to do, in the state, and requested them to do, in the state, because they elected them. But once they were free and became a national representative, like president or vice-president, they were on their own and had to listen to other people throughout the nation and could not be held responsible by any few constituents from a state.

He felt that Sparkman in his heart was a good man and was interested in civil rights for all people and justice for all people. If he was freed from a few constituents, he would vote the way that we would like for him to vote. We took his word. Then we went on and backed Sparkman and Adlai Stevenson.

Chall: This meeting that you had with President Truman, was it primarily black people, a small group of black people, who met with him?

Albrier: Yes. A group of black people who belonged to the committees, clubs, and organizations.

Chall: He came all the way out here just to placate you, in a sense--to make sure that you got on that band wagon, then, of the Democratic party?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: So you must have had some weight here?

Albrier: It was people who control a great many of the votes. He went to Los Angeles the same way and met a group. He met the Bay Area group; then he met the southern California group, also, and explained to them.

Chall: Was there any dissension among you after you heard his explanation? Were some people not really convinced?

Albrier: No, we agreed with him that he was saying something that was true; that he was giving us the right facts, because a great many of the people were from the South. They knew some of the white leaders and some of them who fought for them, but they weren't handicapped politically as to the voting.

At that time, black people in the South were not allowed to vote. If they did, they had to pay a poll tax. That had to be eliminated. They were frightened if they went to the polls to vote--run away from the polls.

So the people like Sparkman had to listen to the other people who could vote for them and put them in office--and take them out of office, if they wished. President Truman vowed to us and pledged to us that he would do everything he could to fight that type of prejudice in the United States, against the citizens of the United States. And I think he did.

Chall: Yes, he did make a start at it.

Albrier: He did one great thing that we asked him to do after the war. He ended discrimination in the army and in the navy, which was a terrible thing and made a great many young people very, very bitter after the war with their own country. President Roosevelt did the same thing. It seems like the presidents feel very deeply on these controversial issues where people are divided and

Albrier: separated in their thinking from each other. President Roosevelt sent Walter White out here to interview myself, Mr. Dellums, Mrs. Pittman, and several others when we weren't so sure that we wanted Truman.

Chall: In 1944.

Albrier: Yes. And we weren't so sure even about him.

Chall: About Walter White?

Albrier: No, about President Roosevelt. We challenged him because at that time, there had been some terrible lynchings in the country and we were upset. President Roosevelt had promised if he ran he would do something about lynching. And he hadn't. We weren't so sure whether we would back President Roosevelt again. So he sent Walter White, the NAACP president, out to talk. He couldn't come himself, but he sent Walter White out to talk to us about it.

Walter White told us that the president wants you to know that he is still against lynching. It's terrible and he's humiliated, being president of the United States when black people are lynched. But there are any number of issues and things he would like to do for the people of the country. He felt that the black people would profit more by it than the losing of maybe twenty or thirty people who might be lynched.

That was, he wanted to start social security. He wanted to start legislation on that because he felt he would not be able to do it during the next term because certain factions in the Congress and the Senate were beginning to fight him on the legislation that he was proposing. He would have to get this legislation through. That would benefit the thousands of black people. They would profit more by that than they would if he would come out against the lynchings. He needed the support of the southern states' senators and congressmen on this legislation he was going to propose.

Chall: It's a real dilemma, isn't it? Always that same dilemma that there was for many years. Was this when he was running for his second term?

Albrier: Yes. We were satisfied with that explanation. We went ahead and backed Roosevelt.

Membership in Local Democratic Party Clubs

Chall: I get the point now with respect to national politics. I wanted to ask you now something about local Democratic party clubs because in your scrapbook and in some other material I've seen, there seem to have been quite a number of clubs in the area and I wondered about your relationship to them. In many of them, you were an officer, so you were obviously active.

In 1945, you were the first vice-president of the Berkeley Democratic Club. Walter Packard was the president. There were a number of other officers listed on the letterhead. At that time, the club was concerned with the passage of one of the early FEPC bills. Were you one of the few black persons in the Berkeley Democratic Club? What kind of club was it?

Albrier: When did President Roosevelt run first?

Chall: Let's see. The first time was in '32.

Albrier: That's right.

Chall: The second time, '36. That goes back a long way.

Albrier: I became more active in 1936, the second term when he ran. At that time, people were going through with this great Depression. They were just wandering around and not tying themselves into anything, especially political, because they had to be trained and educated to know the power of their vote and their duties as a good, responsible citizen. That's the time that a great many black people changed their registration--the second term of President Roosevelt, from Republican to the Democratic party.

The Berkeley Democratic Club was one of the clubs that was organized at that time, and it was a grass-roots club. All of the grass-roots clubs were to educate and train people into politics and political activities, and to know about the committees--the set up and what they were to do. There were hundreds of people who were so busy making a living at the time that they didn't bother about who was president, and who was the governor, and who was their committeeman. We needed those clubs, grass-roots clubs, to get the people in, and get their ear, and get them trained into politics, so they'd know how to register and vote, what to vote for, and how to voice their opinions on issues that they didn't like.

Chall: If you have somebody like Walter Packard as your president, you've got a very concerned citizen there. Was it primarily made up of university people? You said it was grass roots, so it would seem you meant that its members were pretty well distributed around the city, then.

Albrier: It was organized primarily by university people. They were responsible to get other people in the community into the club.

Chall: Was it a very active club?

Albrier: When they were organized, I had shocked everybody by running for the county committee and being elected. Naturally, they asked me if I would become a member--Mr. Packard and the others--of this club when it was organized. So I became a member.

Chall: Ultimately, did people like Gibson and Tarea Pittman and others get in?

Albrier: They were not available at that time. They were not active at that time politically.

Chall: Can you think of any other black people who were in the club besides yourself?

Albrier: No. There were any number of them that lived near the university who joined later. Not many.

Chall: So you were really reaching out then--one of the early black persons to reach out into the white community politically. You had done this also when you ran for the county committee and later the city council.

Albrier: I was fortunate and that made me very happy that I lived in Berkeley, near the university where I met so many of the faculty and university people and was able to associate with them and absorb from them the ideas and concerns of a community. Being very interested also with the students and the children in school, because I was a member of the PTA, that threw me in contact with a great many of the university people--the wives of professors. They invited me to different meetings and I would attend because I was in the learning process, also.

Chall: You were in a learning process. Were they in enough of a learning process to come down, let's say, into the flatlands and into the black community and work with you and for you, helping in the grass-roots work here?

Albrier: Yes, if they had the time, they would. Most of them were very busy people. But they would endorse me--anything that I proposed. A great many of the black people would not believe what white people told them, anyway, at that time. They were from the South, and they'd say, well, they hadn't done anything; we were discriminated against in jobs and other places; they just didn't believe them.

That's one good thing that happened when President Roosevelt came, and when President Truman began to weld people into having confidence, regardless of your color, your race. My grandmother always taught me that there were good people in all colors and all races and they were all God's children. His spirit dwelled in a lot of them. I enjoyed this type of people like Walter Packard, Mrs. Henry Erdman.

Chall: I notice that she had done something for you at one time, Irene Erdman. Yes, I understand, she was a very active and concerned citizen.

Albrier: Mrs. Hibbard also and a great many of those people who were entering politics and taking an interest in politics, and organizing people into clubs.

Chall: This antedated the CDC, too, by many years.

Albrier: Yes. After joining the Berkeley Democratic Club, I started the Twentieth Century Democratic Club.

Chall: I noticed that. You were its president in 1956. Did you start that club before '56? Was that a CDC [Council of Democratic Clubs] club?

Albrier: Yes. But it was started before CDC. We helped set up CDC.

Chall: Did you start the Twentieth Century Democratic Club to be a club in the Seventeenth Assembly District?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Would it have been mixed then or would it have been primarily black?

Albrier: It was primarily black. We had a few white members who lived in this neighborhood, but it was primarily black, because we were engaged in the education of the housewives and black women into politics.

Chall: That wasn't a woman's club, though, was it?

Albrier: No, it was mixed--men and women. We needed the clubs in order to get out the elections and the votes. Clubs were the backbone of the party.

Chall: You started that then before CDC, so that would have been before 1953?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Is that still going?

Albrier: Yes, it is.

Chall: Very good. I wanted to ask you, then, about another early club which has been mentioned by Byron Rumford, but we don't know anything else about it--an Appomattox Club--which he claims was organized by D.G. Gibson and himself, Rumford, which was the first black political club organized exclusively for Negroes. Do you recall that?

Albrier: I know when it was organized. It was organized after Rumford was elected.

Chall: That would have been after 1948, then?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: How active and effective was this club? What was its purpose?

Albrier: The Appomattox?

Chall: Yes.

Albrier: It was to organize and to get the interest of black businessmen in the community, young college students in the community, so they would become interested and concerned about politics to further their own ambitions.

It was in the mind of D.G. Gibson that some of the young attorneys should be judges, and some of the businessmen should be advanced to other activities that politics could put them in and be responsible for if they were politically inclined.

Chall: Was this a men's organization, primarily business and professional?

Albrier: It was mostly men, yes.

Chall: It was Gibson's idea, then, to promote the movement of black men through politics by organizing them separately so that they would then get a feeling for their abilities in that direction?

Albrier: That was when he got the position, voted in by the state central committee, as the Seventh Congressional District chairman. Before then, we didn't have any black person serving as chairman. Before, they didn't have anybody who was a member of the state central committee.

Chall: No blacks?

Albrier: But me. I was the only one. That was the time when Mr. Francis Dunn and a great many of those people were very active. We all came into politics about the same time. Francis Dunn and Judge Monroe Friedman--he wasn't a judge then but he was chairman of the central committee. Those other people, I can give you their names.

Chall: I've seen them on your letterhead. I mean, you've got some letterheads in your scrapbook.

Albrier: Well, I have some more. I had a magazine from a Jackson Day Dinner. A great many of those people have passed away. I became disinterested and not as active when Byron Rumford came on the scene. I felt that I'd laid the groundwork and I needed rest from being so active.

Chall: At the state level.

Albrier: Yes, at the state level. I attended the meetings when we had the state central committee main meeting, but I wasn't active. He had other people in the clubs and organizations to be appointed. They had an East Bay Democratic Club organized.

Chall: I've got that on my list.

Albrier: --and most of their appointments were made. A great many members of that club used to be in the Twentieth Century Club.

Chall: Let's see now. The Twentieth Century Democratic Club was the club that represented primarily the Seventeenth Assembly District?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Then I have here that the East Bay Democratic Club was also an organization in the Seventeenth Assembly District.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Were they competitive?

Albrier: No.

Chall: What would have been the difference?

Albrier: That club organized when Byron Rumford became the assemblyman.

Chall: The East Bay Democratic Club did?

Albrier: Yes. Afterwards.

Chall: And the Appomattox Club was also one of his organizations?

Albrier: Yes. But the Appomattox Club was before Rumford, as I remember now. That was a club that was mostly organized on history. A group of business people on Seventh Street and other places. They became politically active after Byron Rumford was elected.

Chall: So it was the East Bay Democratic Club and the Twentieth Century Democratic Club, then, that were the most active in the area. You say they didn't--there was no competition between them for members or in whatever their activities were?

Albrier: No, because there were hundreds of voters who could become members. The members would influence other people and voters--their friends, to join the club. I organized another club, the Golden Gate Democratic Club.

Chall: [Laughs] You did? I don't know about that one.

Albrier: Mrs. Potts took over the presidency of the Twentieth Century Democratic Club and I organized the Golden Gate Democratic Club.

Chall: What were the areas, the boundaries, of the Golden Gate Democratic Club?

Albrier: The Golden Gate had no boundaries. It was the Bay Area.

Chall: The Bay Area?

Albrier: We took in members from all the assembly districts. It was a club made up more of older people who were Democrats.

Chall: You established it for a certain purpose then?

Albrier: Yes. It was a women's club. We were established in order to educate women into politics and train women into politics through community activities.

Chall: At the same time, you were also working, locally, in the Federation of Democratic Women of Alameda County and the Alameda County Democratic Women's Study Clubs.

ALAMEDA COUNTY DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S STUDY CLUB

Organized in 1932 with regular luncheon meetings monthly except in July and August. Affiliated with Women's National Democratic Club, Washington, D. C.

SPECIAL NOTICE: Meeting Place: Tom Lovely's Buffet
Grand Avenue near Perkins

PURPOSE: To afford Democratic women an opportunity to obtain information about and discuss problems and issues confronting the country; to do educational work; to formulate their own policy views; and to create that force of public opinion without which no political party can operate successfully.

DATE:	Wednesday, December 3, 1969
TIME:	12:00 noon (Arrive early for parking)
PLACE:	Tom Lovely's Buffet Grand Avenue at Perkins St.
CHRISTMAS PARTY:	Christmas songs and festivities
	Contributions to be donated to the Committee of Responsibility to aid in the restoration of severely injured Vietnamese children.
GIFT EXCHANGE:	Gifts of $1.00 or under to be exchanged.

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Frances Albrier, President
1621 Oregon St., Berkeley, Ca. 94703
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Dorothy M. Comar, Secretary
3849 Coolidge Ave., Oakland, Ca. 94602
Phone: 533-0241

Albrier: Alameda County Democratic Women's Study Club was the oldest women's club in the county. It existed when I ran for the central committee. When I was elected to the central committee, they immediately involved me in the activities of that club. It was a study club, so that we could study politics and have classes on politics and political science, and to educate women. That's why it's called study club. It still exists and I'm still a member.

Chall: And you were president in '67,'68. Was the Golden Gate Democratic Club meant primarily to be an activist club, then, for Democrats--was it mostly black women of the Bay Area?

Albrier: No, it was a mixed club, but it was for housewives--to corral housewives and women like that, working women, into politics. To educate them and give them an idea of the workings and structure of politics and the party. Because a great many women didn't know who was a central committeeman, who was a state committeeman, and who were the officers in the state committee, who were elected--who were congressmen and who were assemblymen.

Chall: That's a big job.

Albrier: And who were senators. Who supported the president. Some women had no idea about politics, only what they learned in school, and then they dropped it. They took up their vocations and their home life, and left politics to the men. After the Depression, people had more time and became interested in what this was all about. We needed clubs and organizations to get these women into so they could learn the mechanism of running the country and their part in it. Because we all felt that someday women would step in and take over some of these offices themselves in order to save their children and homes through politics.

Chall: Have you any idea about what time that was that you organized the Twentieth Century Democratic Club? Let's see, that was probably late forties, early fifties. And the Golden Gate Democratic Club?

Albrier: And the first beginning of the CDC.

Chall: And the Golden Gate Democratic Club was what? An early CDC club?

Albrier: No, it was later.

Chall: Later?

Albrier: Yes. About three years later, or four.

Chall: I see. Maybe about 1958?

Albrier: 1958. The CDC needed more clubs. They encouraged us to organize more Democratic clubs and get the Democrats interested in a club--organized into a club. They could take up the issues on legislation and everything through these clubs, and have more people.

Chall: Then they also would have delegates to their endorsing conventions for determining the candidates too, which would be important.

Albrier: Yes. That was the idea.

Chall: Speaking of the CDC, I notice that in 1956--that seems to be the year that you were very, very busy politically--[chuckles] you were the treasurer of the Seventh Congressional District CDC club.

Albrier: Yes.

Minorities and the California Democratic Council

Chall: But the CDC has been criticized over the years, (and I think it was from the very beginning), because it didn't have enough black representation. It was claimed that there weren't enough minorities of any kind, black or Mexican, in the CDC, in the membership and certainly in the leadership. Wayne Amerson, who felt rather strongly about that, claims that eventually the blacks organized something called the Minority Group Conference, and then later on a Negro political action association, simply because they felt left out of the CDC.* Can you give me any background on minorities in the CDC as you saw it?

Albrier: The CDC was organized not for blacks or whites. It was organized for Democrats and the election of Democratic candidates.

Chall: Yes, that's right.

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*Interview with A. Wayne Amerson, Northern California and its Challenges to a Negro in the Mid-1900s, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley, 1974. Courtesy The Bancroft Library.

Albrier: It took them, I think, three or four years before they became interested in backing issues of the state. Governor Pat Brown was one of the officers that stressed those ideas and injected into the CDC that they were responsible for getting the people concerned in the issues of the state. And issues that could be remedied by state laws. They didn't take any time on who they were electing.

A great many times when I went to the CDC meetings, they would ask me if I would run for certain offices, and I would say no, because I didn't feel I had the time, and I had my family, and it cost a great deal of money--the party didn't have any money for expenses. You were on your own. You had to pay for your own expenses. A lot of times at the CDC conventions, you paid your own expenses because your club didn't have enough money to send over one delegate. That one person was the president and the other people went on their own because they were interested and they wanted to see what was going on.

There weren't enough black people who were attending the CDC at that time to elect you. You had to have friends of other races to elect you at the time. Usually, they put up their own friends from their own districts, because they had more clubs. Although there was some discrimination and they didn't appoint blacks at times--but that was the reason.

Chall: I see. It was just a matter of numbers and cost.

Albrier: That's right. And cost. Now the black clubs didn't have the money to put into CDC. They didn't have the money to put behind candidates, to contribute to candidates who were running.

All that we had were the votes. We had the masses of people who were not interested in politics, the masses of workers, like through the unions. We had to ring the doorbells and get them interested. It was not until then that we could demand that we be elected to some offices, or that they would have to ask us for our information on how we stood on issues.

Chall: That took a while.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Do you recall the Minority Group Conference and the Negro Political Action Association? Were they here?

Albrier: I recall the minority conference, because that was called by Dr. Carlton Goodlett every year.

Chall: Oh yes, I see--a conference. It really wasn't a club, solely.

Albrier: No, it was a conference of leaders and interested persons throughout the Bay Area to discuss the issues affecting the black people.

Chall: I recall seeing that material in your scrapbook. Were those effective?

Albrier: Yes.

[end tape 7, side 1; begin tape 7, side 2]

Berkeley Politics: Electing Blacks to City Council and School Board

Chall: Now we can talk about the Berkeley political scene--Berkeley politics. That's really where you spent quite a bit of effort. As I see it, it took from about sometime in the thirties until about 1961 before you got a black candidate on the city council, even though you tried many times. That was when Wilmont Sweeney got on the council and Roy Nichols onto the Berkeley school board. Of course, Byron Rumford had been in the assembly since '48, and that was an important position.

Were you active in the Berkeley Interracial Committee that was started in the forties, which I guess, tried to get both the white and the black communities together for various social issues? Did you take part in that? I understand D.G. Gibson was somewhat active in it; helped start it.

Albrier: I can't remember the Berkeley Interracial Committee.

Chall: How about the Berkeley Project? I don't really know what that was. I just have its name here.

Albrier: I don't remember. They had any number of committees and organizations that came up afterwards in those years. It took us a number of years to organize. I endorsed and backed and worked for any number of blacks to run for city council before Sweeney ran. There was Tom Berkley who ran [1947], Lionel Wilson who ran [1953], and I ran in 1939.

Chall: Leon J. Richardson was a write-in vote for mayor in 1943. Was he black?

Albrier: No.

Chall: Then Roy Nichols tried once, too, to get on the city council.

Albrier: Roy Nichols ran once, for city council.

Chall: That's right--in 1959. Ura Harvel, for the school board in 1953.

Albrier: Yes, Ura Harvel ran for school board.

Chall: I noticed on the literature here that I got out of your scrapbook that these people had--Lionel Wilson, Ura Harvel--good backing in the black community. There just weren't enough of you, I guess, to swing the vote.

Albrier: No. And we didn't have an organization that could campaign in the hill area, to do precinct work. That was one of the things that started the CDC--to start the clubs back in those early years --to be able to organize and encourage people to do precinct work, to be precinct workers, to get citizens registered to vote. That's how we got to people without money in the party, the Democratic party, supporting Roosevelt. Because people were interested in him and we were able to get precinct workers.

Chall: They got out and worked.

Albrier: Yes, even if they just took their block. They would do that. I remember the party needed money so badly--it was the last term that he ran. They said, well, we don't want large contributors to the party. The party would owe to those contributors. We want the people to contribute. That was one reason why we organized clubs and got people into the clubs. Those who weren't able to take a precinct, would take their block. Everybody contributed a dollar, just a dollar, to the campaign for the election of Roosevelt, as president. That's how money was raised throughout the country. I think in the Bay Area nearly everybody contributed. I know I had children contributing their quarter. They wanted to get into the picture.

Chall: The early Dollars for Democrats movement.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: So when it came to electing people like Wilson and Harvel, and that was in 1953, it was a try, I guess, because it was worth trying.

Albrier: It was a try, yes, to see how far we advanced and how far we were organizing, getting a candidate elected. It was the forerunner of what's happened today.

Chall: The disappointment at losing was not as great as it might have been, because you knew what you were up against. You knew that you were simply making an effort to see how far you could go?

Albrier: Yes. One way, too--whenever any of those persons came up and wanted to run and felt they wanted to be a candidate for anything like the city council or the board of education--it kept that interest up. It kept the people's interest up that someday they would be candidates--they would win an election.

Chall: It took another seven years after 1961 before Ron Dellums got on the council. That was 1968, so it took quite a while before you got another black on the council. Then, with the elections of D'Army Bailey, Ira Simmons, Ron Dellums, Wilmont Sweeney, and the others, did it become an issue not so much about getting a black person on the council but which black person? Was there a division over what Berkeley people called the radicals? Was that a problem in your community, since many of those on the so-called radical slate were black?

Albrier: Time changes things. People change. The black community had changed with its youth. The young people felt that the time had come when we should send some blacks into these offices, like the council, Congress. The blacks had supported [Jeffrey] Cohelan for any number of years and he had made an excellent congressman. He had been interested in all of the community. But they felt the time had come now when they should have a black in if they could. That was the type of spirit that pervaded throughout the community--that we should have a black voice who was close to us, who knew the trials and who knew what the black people were thinking, who could speak for them.

Then, through that change, it was the change through the years that a great many whites felt. The young white people felt the same way. They had combined and formed coalitions and had had different conferences and studies in homes and churches. They felt that they'd like to join. It was time that we should have more than whites. The black community, with their help, would be able to get black persons into these offices.

And that was the beginning of Dellums when he first ran for city council. It was in the days that OEO [Office of Economic Opportunity] came up. OEO--the training and skills and organization work under OEO--it was all these young people who had obtained jobs and positions in that government organization. It made a change in the type of thinking and a change in those young people. They were the ones who decided that we should have a black city councilman. Dellums was interested and versatile--was interested in politics; so they chose him to run for city council.

Albrier: Then they decided they should have a black congressman. There were then enough black people and enough black voters, with friendly white voters, who would like to see that change--of having a black congressman to represent people there. So they decided to put in Dellums. It just goes to show you that as the years go by, the thinking changes. And time changes, and people will change. I'm sure if the older people like my grandmother had been alive, they would have welcomed the change. They predicted that the time would come when the time was right, these changes would be.

Chall: As long as you're prepared to do something about it, you're prepared when the opportunity comes.

Albrier: That you be prepared. So, through the years, the Roosevelt years, and the years of the pioneers in politics, they had already laid the groundwork for councilmen, and congressmen, and assemblymen to be elected.

Chall: You were not upset then with the change from, let's say, a moderate black like Byron Rumford to more radical blacks like Ron Dellums, or D'Army Bailey, or Ira Simmons--this didn't bother you any? Did it bother other people in the black community as it bothered some whites? I don't know whether they cared so much whether blacks were elected, but they were concerned about the so-called radical turn.

Albrier: There's one thing about the radicals that I'm deeply concerned about. That is, I feel, and a great many of the black people feel, that there are people who are not genuinely interested in our condition, but they use our condition to further their own policies. For instance, it's groups that have been educated in America to do that--to get among minority groups of people who have suffered through discrimination and oppression, being without jobs, and to rally them around against these things in order to put over their ideas of what they want--not because they love us or they're so much interested, but they're using our condition to further their radical ideas and to get their candidates elected.

Chall: I know you felt that about the Communist party and radicals of the fifties, and thirties and forties, but I just wondered whether you consider some of these black persons who were on the council to be not interested so much in the community?

Albrier: No, not on the council.

Chall: You're not putting D'Army Bailey and Ira Simmons in that category, are you?

Albrier: No, D'Army Bailey--I don't know so much about Ira Simmons--I haven't talked to him as much as D'Army Bailey. D'Army Bailey was considered to be a radical, but he hid behind that idea of being a radical in order to educate people to the violent means of these things and the violent thinking and what might happen. I don't think he was as radical as he appeared to be.

The Fair Housing Referendum

Chall: As people thought he was. Let me check with you about this whole matter of the Berkeley open housing referendum. In 1961, after Wilmont Sweeney and Zack Brown got on the council and formed a majority with Arthur Harris and Bernice May and Jack Kent, they put through an open housing ordinance, and it was immediately challenged. So there was a referendum--fair housing referendum in 1963.

First the council, before it put up the ordinance on open housing, had appointed a large citizens' committee to study the issue. Were you on that citizens' committee to study discrimination in housing? There were only eighteen persons on it, but there were two black women. I wasn't sure whether you were one of them or not.

Albrier: No, I wasn't. I remember the committee, but I wasn't on the committee. I attended some of their meetings.

Chall: Then, when the referendum had to come to a vote, there were some organizations.

Albrier: I think from one of those papers that I gave you had the pictures of people on that housing leaflet.

Chall: Yes, I have that. According to--this is Wayne Amerson I think--according to him, the overall organization to pass that ordinance was the Berkeley Political Action Committee for Fair Housing. Then there was a Negro cooperating organization which was known as the Committee for Fair Housing. Charles Wilson was its chairman.

Albrier: Yes, I was on that committee.

Chall: You were on that committee.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Now, that must have been a hard-working committee. You were committed to getting that referendum passed. It almost did, actually. Was there a strong feeling of disappointment when that failed in the black community?

Albrier: Yes. That was a committee and an issue that was very deep, and it brought people out, and their concerns. It took a person who was committed to justice and what was right to stand up. We found many of our friends whom we thought were committed, who just couldn't use their names for fair housing. They wouldn't let their names be used.

Chall: Mostly white?

Albrier: Yes. It brought a lot of disappointment to us because we were so sure that any number of them would help back this committee with their names, but they felt that they couldn't.

Chall: I see. So that the over-all umbrella committee, the Berkeley Political Action Committee for Fair Housing, didn't represent everybody.

Albrier: No.

Chall: That was followed a year later by Proposition 14 on the state ballot--open housing, the Rumford Bill, which also lost. The black community must have had strong feelings at that time about such matters. How, considering your ability to look ahead and not get bitter, how did you feel about the losing of those two issues?

Albrier: I felt that in time we would win them. It took us twenty years to get the Fair Employment Practice Committee--that FEP bill passed--twenty years. Every year, we'd go after it. One time we'd have it on the ballot; get it on the ballot and get enough signatures, and we'd lose. We finally began to grow and grow, and educate and got the commitment of the party behind a Fair Employment Practices Committee. When we brought it up, Pat Brown was to be governor. That was one of the things he promised us--if he would be governor, he would see that we'd have a Fair Employment Practice Committee--which he did.

Chall: Yes, he did.

Albrier: Even Oregon. I think Oregon had more prejudiced people than we had in California, we thought. Even the state of Oregon passed a Fair Employment Practice Act.

Chall: Earlier?

Albrier: Yes, before California did.

Chall: So you felt that in time there would be open housing.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Is there? Has it happened, really, yet? Is there really open housing? It's on the books; it's legal, but is it open?

Albrier: It's being developed very well. TV spots give a lot on it, which has re-educated a lot of people who believe in justice who never thought much about it. They're beginning to question themselves on how they stood. A great many of them said, "Now if I was in a black's place and wanted to rent a house, I would hate to know that they didn't rent to me because I was black." It's a matter of education. This whole thing of discrimination has come up through a period of years from one generation to the other. It's going to take that to tear it down. That's one of the things that I tell the young people that my grandmother instilled in me: that it's going to take time to tear these things down, but it will come down. You must have patience.

Chall: And you've got to work for it.

Albrier: And commitment.

Chall: And commitment.

Albrier: I've seen a great many of those things. I've seen a great many young women, young black women, have jobs that I was turned down on. They're in and they're handling them. Those doors have been opened. I feel eventually that many, many other doors will be opened.

School Integration

Chall: What about school integration? Your children were out of school, I suppose, by the time that moved in. Have you been following it?

Albrier: Yes, but I was active in the PTA. I was active in that fight for school integration.

Chall: Have you any feelings about how it's turned out? Berkeley was certainly the earliest pioneer.

Albrier: Berkeley, I think, was the leader, especially of the busing. Although we didn't have the problem of busing as some of the larger cities had. I think it's turned out quite well. I think it's changed things. I see a great many interracial teachers in the Berkeley schools. I think we're getting along to the idea of one world. Who is that who wrote One World?

Chall: Wendell Willkie.

Albrier: Wendell Willkie. I often think of Wendell Willkie's one world, because I read his book. I have it somewhere around here. I kept that book.

Community Leaders

Chall: It was a forerunner, wasn't it?

I wanted to ask you something about a few of the people who must have been leaders on both sides of these issues in terms of black representation, integration, are the best words, I guess, for the two things. In terms of some of the black women, I picked up a few names. There are probably many others. There was a Mrs. Chamberlain, who apparently helped run Wilmont Sweeney's campaign in 1961, and somebody named Esther Autio who ran Roy Nichols' campaign that same year for school board. Are they members of the black community? Have they been active politically?

Albrier: No, they were members who were interested in those campaigns and ran the office campaigns.

Chall: What about Vivian Osborne Marsh? I know that she was active in some of the women's organizations that we'll be talking about

Chall: next time. She was also an active member of the Republican party. Served on the Republican central committee.

Albrier: She was active in the Republican party and was active in her sorority. I forget which that was--Alpha Kappas, I think. She ran herself for city council, twice.

Chall: Oh, did she? I didn't know that.

Albrier: Yes, and wasn't elected.

Chall: I've never seen that name on the list.

Albrier: She ran, but she's mostly active in fraternal groups now, and has been for a long time.

Chall: The fact that she was an active member of the Republican County Central Committee and you were an active woman member of the Democratic County Central Committee--did that create any friction betwen you, or did you feel that it's better to have each of you in a different party?

Albrier: No. I never had any friction between the parties. I always felt and said to those who were in the Republican party, you do your best in your party and to fight for the things and the people you feel are against discrimination and segregation, and I will do it in the Democratic party. That way, we can have a wonderful country. I didn't feel that all Negro people should belong to the Democratic party or all should belong to the Republican party. I thought we should belong to both parties and give our best to those parties we belonged to or chose to belong to.

Chall: I notice she backed Lionel Wilson when he was running for city council, so you moved together when you could.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Frankie Jones--I see her picture every now and then. She was active.

Albrier: Frankie Jones was very active in her church first, Beth Eden Baptist Church, which was active. They had organizations and committees in that church--community organizations of interest to the people under Reverend Hubbard. After she retired from being active in her church, she became active in the Democratic party in the Seventeenth Assembly District club, that was chaired by Leo Brown.

Albrier: Then, when the president of the NAACP--Reverend Stripp--could no longer serve as president of NAACP because of his activities at the university, Frankie was chosen to be the NAACP president of Berkeley. At that time, Berkeley had set up its own NAACP organization. She served many years as their president. She was very active in NAACP.

Chall: And Mabel Howard? Who was she?

Albrier: Mabel Howard came on the scene when model cities were being organized. She took on the BART [Bay Area Rapid Transit] fight, on undergrounding. She works a lot with the interracial groups who fight against racial discrimination. She's known as Mama Howard. [Laughter] But she's new on the scene. She came in during the war years.

Chall: Tarea Pittman, I know she's been around for a long time.

Albrier: Tarea Pittman is a Californian.

Chall: NAACP and she worked in the Democratic party.

Albrier: She came in to work in the Democratic party when Byron Rumford was elected. For many years, she was western regional chairman of NAACP.

Chall: Very active people.

Clinton White--I saw his name, I think on one of these flyers. Attorney Clinton White. Are there two Clinton Whites in Berkeley--an attorney and a painter?

Albrier: Yes, there's a painter, Clinton White. I think Attorney Clinton White lives in Oakland. Yes, he's judge now.

Chall: That's right. So I guess it's probably the painter who has been active politically in Berkeley. Has he been active also in the Coop movement?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Has he been an effective leader in the community here? Did you know him--work with him?

Albrier: Yes, he's very active. Clinton White was very active in the Coop and very active in the labor movement, professional labor movement, for the benefit of minority groups. For instance, he belongs to the Minority Conference of Contractors that always tries to see

Albrier: that on each large job, they have an affirmative action program, so tht minority contractors will be able to get some of the work. He also is a member of the YMCA and was the chairman of the South Berkeley YMCA, which was instrumental in getting a new South Berkeley YMCA building on Russell and California.

Chall: He has been a hard working citizen in the community. Some people just stick with it, don't they?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: I have the name Potts. I think there are two of them: Lillian and--what's her husband's name?

Albrier: Weilan.

Chall: They've been active a long time?

Albrier: Yes, they've been active for a long while. Lillian Potts was active with me in politics. She became the club president.

Chall: Which club?

Albrier: Twentieth Century. And was active in CDC. She was, and is still very active, in the Northern California NAACP branches.

Chall: And her husband has been active, too?

Albrier: He's not as active as she is. He serves as a good member, a dedicated member.

Chall: How about Leo Brown, who served with you quite a while on the CDC committee and in the Democratic party?

Albrier: Leo Brown has served in many organizations, community organizations. He's now president of the Berkeley Neighborhood Legal Services, and deeply committed to that organization. He's done a great deal of work in building it up. In former years, he was active in the Twentieth Century Club and in several black organizations that came up and went down. He's active in the NAACP and many other community clubs and committees. He's one of Berkeley's most dedicated citizens for community progress.

[Interruption by ringing doorbell. Mrs. Albrier's daughter, Anita Black came to visit.]
[end tape 7, side 2]

The Effect of Electing a Black Man to the School Board

[Interview 8, March 1, 1978]
[begin tape 8, side 1]

Chall: I wanted to pick up just a little from what we were talking about the last time, because I think there are a couple of questions I didn't ask you.

When the black leadership finally succeeded in getting Roy Nichols onto the school board, what did you hope to gain by having this person finally--at least one black on the school board?

Albrier: The black community and the organizations felt that to have an outstanding minister and a person who had done so much work in education, especially with black children, and who knew their problems, and had been able to communicate with them and receive from them their ideas about their problems in school, would benefit not only Berkeley but the whole nation. We felt very much elated in getting him on the board of education in Berkeley, especially at the time when we were thinking of desegregating the schools.

He was also an active person in NAACP. He knew their objectives of education throughout the country, for black children and the elimination of racial prejudice in schools.

Chall: He was not only a well-known minister but he was a well known civil rights leader, is that it?

Albrier: That's right.

Chall: Did the white liberals who were on the school board reflect, then, what the black community wanted, in the schools? Were you able to work with them?

Albrier: Yes, they were elated at the election, too. The white liberals helped elect Dr. Nichols to the school board. Naturally, they were just as proud and happy about it as we were because they could see that, through him, they would be able to open up some of the avenues in education to Berkeley--to benefit not only Berkeley, but the nation.

Chall: In a sense, getting Roy Nichols on the board was like getting Wilmont Sweeney on the city council.

Albrier: On the city council, yes.

Chall: It allowed the liberals to move in the direction in which they had hoped to move.

Albrier: The idea in having someone on the board and city council was that the community felt someone was in a key political spot who looked through their eyes; who could see and know their thoughts, their ideas, and their ambitions as citizens.

Chall: Were you on any of the committees that were set up to consider integration, like the Staats Committee and the Hadsell Committee? This was for school integration.

Albrier: I was on the Staats Committee for a while, at the beginning of it.

Chall: I don't know very much about it. My understanding is that they were concerned with an approach to integrating the schools. Was that it? The Staats Committee?

Albrier: Yes. The Staats Committee was to open up the avenues and through educational activities promote the idea of integration not only for black teachers and black people on the board of education, but other minorities as well.

The older citizens in Berkeley, especially the liberal ones, have always had the idea of making Berkeley a model city, along those lines. In the line of communication with different people, different races, because of the university. We have been very fortunate in having the university that has helped do these things through their liberal teachers, instructors, and professors at the university, especially presidents like Dr. [Benjamin] Wheeler, [Clark] Kerr and those presidents of the university who were liberal.

Chall: In your day, then, you found that Dr. Kerr and the other professors really got into the town and helped out, rather than just staying in their own ivory towers, as they're often accused of doing.

Albrier: Yes. A great many of them were members and were active in the Democratic party like Dr. Max Radin and others there who had those liberal broad views and ideas about people and education.

Chall: I notice that Carol Sibley was honored by the National Council of Negro Women in 1973 as an Outstanding Woman of Northern California. She, along with you, was one of nine women honored. From this list, my guess is she might have been the only white woman. Do you want to look at that list, because I thought that was an interesting honor. You might tell me about her.

Albrier: Yes, she was.

Chall: Why would Carol Sibley be so honored?

ALbrier: Carol Sibley was honored for her liberal views on black women and on education for black children. She was one of the hard workers and one of those who worked very diligently to desegregate and integrate the schools. She worked very hard to see that the schools were integrated, every one of them, with black and white children, so that those children would grow up knowing each other and so that they would be able to converse with each other. White children of Berkeley would not go out of the city of Berkeley or the state of California, not knowing anything about the black race because they would have attended an integrated school--because they would have gone to school with those children. Not only the black children, but there were the Spanish children, and Mexican children, Japanese and Chinese. The communities were segregated which caused the segregated schools.

In the black community were the Spanish children, the Chinese and Japanese children. Mrs. Sibley was dedicated to that idea of ending discrimination in the schools by desegregating them. That's why she was so honored.

Chall: Was she the most valuable white woman leader, then, in this whole integration movement?

Albrier: Yes, she was. At the time she became the board of education director, she was elected to the board of education by members of the black community as well as the white, so she could finish her job. That director on the board of education would have to influence the superintendent of schools as well as others on the board, and she was a person that we felt was able to do so because of her dedication.

Chall: She had worked for integration prior to her being on the board?

Albrier: Yes, she had.

Busing as a Means of Integration

Chall: Have you had any second thoughts about this whole subject of busing children in school districts to achieve integration? That is, not just Berkeley but big cities like Boston, or Los Angeles, and Oakland?

Albrier: Berkeley was a little different than the larger cities, because we're not so far apart. For instance, West Berkeley is not so far apart from North Berkeley; it would only take a few minutes to take children from West Berkeley to North Berkeley, or from East Berkeley to South Berkeley to school. But in the larger cities, it creates some difficulties, even in San Francisco, to bus children across town, across the city, and to other districts where they're not familiar and they don't know much about each other.

In Berkeley, the children had a chance to meet with each other because they met with each other when they got to high school. The younger ones were often with the older ones, and they were more used to meeting each other and having activities with each other, before the busing took place. Due to its being a smaller city, it was easier to do so in Berkeley than it was in the large cities like Chicago and New York, where it's miles between the South and North, and the West and the East, and where people live their whole lifetimes in the East or the West part of the city, and never see the persons living in the other part of the city. So they become strangers and they don't know each other; it's hard for them to communicate. Besides the different races and nationalities made it very difficult, and still make it very difficult, for the larger cities than we had in Berkeley.

Chall: Is there any answer, do you think, to integrating people, then, if it's almost impossible to get it done through the schools? How can it be achieved?

Albrier: The only answer to it <u>is</u> education. We have to educate people to communicate with other people. I think with the younger generation coming up, they are studying languages and they will be able to communicate with other people and understand their motives and their ideas through education.

Chall: Even if they can't mingle with them in the schools?

Albrier: Even if they can't mingle with them in the schools. Indirectly, in all of the schools, one time or another, they all do meet each other and communicate with each other. For instance, a city may have a band of the schools of the city, and they may take a black child from the East, an Italian child from over that side of the

Albrier: town or community, and they're all there in the band, or they're on the football team, or they're in other games, and are able to meet with each other and to know each other--and respect each other. People are beginning now to be able to communicate with each other and understand each other through different organizations, even through politics--that's bringing people together. As the masses of people become interested in politics and getting into politics and community organizations, then they meet other people. Then they begin to talk to other people and exchange ideas with other people; and that's an educational process.

Chall: So the requirements in political parties to integrate the conventions and the clubs is one move to knowing each other.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: I take it then, that you don't necessarily despair because school busing in large cities seems to be almost an impossibility.

Albrier: No. I feel another way will be found out for people to get together and to know each other. One way people have been able to get together and know each other--and it's a bad way--and that was through the wars. Through our armies and navies. Those are institutions that are helping to get people together and helping them to know each other; communicate with each other, and understand each other and understand each other's ways of living and their history and their participation in the world.

VI CLUBS AND CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS

Integrating White Women's Groups

The Berkeley League of Women Voters

Chall: Now, I wanted to find out from you something about your work in the women's clubs. I thought I'd start first with those clubs or organizations that were for women that you seem to have integrated. I'm not sure you did it on your own, but that seems to have been what might have happened. I thought I'd ask you a little about the League of Women Voters. I think I read somewhere in your scrapbook that you had been one of the first black women in the League of Women Voters in Berkeley. Is that accurate?

Albrier: Yes. During the thirties, the twenties and the thirties, there were no black women in any of the white clubs that were interested in communities and activities of people, because it was a pattern of segregation. It was a pattern of segregation in the biggest institution in the United States, and that's the church. Naturally, these clubs came down with the same pattern. They were clubs for white people, white women only. They didn't open their doors up to black women.

I think the reason was that they felt that the black people were not yet educated enough to participate in the clubs. Out West, they never saw a black institution like Tuskegee or Howard University, or Hampton University, or Fisk University, where there were hundreds of black students and black teachers--and white teachers--who were teaching in these schools.

So, in the League of Women Voters, there were no black members, until President Roosevelt ran and a great many black people got in on the scene to see that he was elected, because he promised to open the doors to so many things for all of the citizens of the United States. It was the Depression that came along, and people

Albrier: were idle, and people were disturbed, and they began to think about things more. At that time, labor came on the scene and they were in a turmoil because they had discriminated. The CIO had taken in large numbers of men from different crafts. The AFL was the one that was the most discriminatory. They had separate unions. Where they had unions, they were separate. But the CIO came along and started taking in everybody, so that began to make other people think. It made the AFL officers think that soon the CIO would outnumber them because they were taking in all of the blacks. All those different situations and conditions were going on at the time when Roosevelt was in his second term.

The League of Women Voters began to expand. There was one lady in the league that worked in the Democratic party with me, and she always gave me ideas to bring up in the central committee. I can't think of her name right now, but I will think of it.

Anyway, she worked with the League of Women Voters. At that time, there were women like Mrs. [Ruth] Scheer and other women in the league. She had the program of children. She was to find out all the activities and needs of children in the Bay Area. One of the needs of children had to do with the newsboy. The newsboys--a great many of the mothers had reported to her that their children didn't have insurance. The newspapers were not insuring the newsboys who were carrying the papers and delivering the papers. Any number of them had gotten hurt and there wasn't any insurance for them.

She wanted to take it up through the league to see that these newsboys became insured. She asked me if I would join her committee. I informed her that the league does not take in black members. She said, "That's done away with; they will now, because I'm going to suggest that you be a member and be a member of my committee." She brought it up to the board and told them, "Now, Mrs. Albrier is a member and has been elected to the Alameda County Democratic Central Committee. She's the only woman on that committee. I think it's time we open our doors to black members." So they accepted me as a member. I became the first [black] member of the League of Women Voters.

Chall: That's quite a story. In Berkeley, they actually did not take in members who were black? If you had wanted to submit your membership and pay dues, could they have kept you out without even a discussion?

Albrier: If I had submitted my membership at that time, I don't think--I think there were enough liberal women members of the board to have voted it through, but before then, there weren't.

Chall: I see. You couldn't have become a member.

Albrier: No. You see, we had the League of Colored Women Voters in action at the same time. They met at the Linden Street YWCA. At that time, even the YWCAs were separate.

Chall: Yes. That's on my list after the League of Women Voters.

Albrier: A great many of the black women didn't think or want to belong to the white league--because of their attitude.

Chall: Was the way that the League of Colored Women Voters studied issues the same as the way the League of Women Voters, which was then all white, studied issues?

Albrier: Yes, they were similar, but the Colored Women's League studied discriminatory issues, especially in labor and other things that they thought were discriminatory. They used their power and their organization to fight against it, or to protest. For instance, there were no black nurses in the city and county hospitals and the league took that problem up.

Chall: Did you go on this woman's committee that dealt with children, then, in the Berkeley League of Women Voters?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: You worked with the committee?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: How were you accepted on the committee and in the league?

Albrier: I was accepted with open arms, and very graciously accepted by the members in the league. There was one thing that happened in the league at the Berkeley Women's City Club. They were very discriminatory--no blacks--they had no blacks invited to eat in their dining room. Nobody who had ever used their dining room had ever invited any black women to the dining room. But the League of Women Voters had members in that club. When they didn't finish their agenda, they would finish it at lunch. They would have lunch in the dining room. Whoever it was at the time said, "Well, I'm going to take Mrs. Albrier as my guest to lunch." They could bring a guest. And they did. They took me as a guest for a long time. They didn't seem to object as long as there was only one.

Their black employees were elated because they saw a black woman in the dining room, eating, because they knew their policies.

Albrier: Afterwards, there was another lady that joined, named Mrs. Margaret Nottage--the league.

Chall: A black woman?

Albrier: Yes. When she came into the dining room as a guest to eat, the members did not protest at that time, but they did to some of their members and told them they knew the policy: that they did not open their dining rooms to black people. The league told them--it was women in the league like Mrs. [Bernice] May and Mrs. Scheer and those types of women who did not believe in discrimination. It was one of the things that they were protesting all the time, and that they were dedicated to destroy, if they could--discrimination against citizens, whatever citizens they were.

When it came time for the league to renew their contract to meet in the building, they would not renew their contract. They felt it was because they were having mixed races in the league, that used their dining room.

Chall: So the club would not renew the league's contract?

Albrier: No. So the club went to the Town and Gown Clubhouse to meet after that.

Chall: The league did.

Albrier: Those are some of the mild discriminatory policies that the white dedicated friends of blacks in Berkeley fought against. We had to fight for each other to break that down.

Chall: That was in the forties.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: How many black women would you say came into the league during those years?

Albrier: There weren't very many who came into the league. Afterwards, there were, I think, about seven or eight who joined the league.

Chall: Were any of them ever on the league board? Were you?

Albrier: I don't remember whether any of them came on the board but they became members. They were active in some of the different committees, in different departments and studies.

Chall: The league's methods of going about achieving its goals are different from any that you had in other organizations. They study at length issues before they take a stand and they have a consensus on that study before they take a stand. You were more of an activist and had been an active Democrat. How did you feel about the way in which the league achieved its goals for the changes in government, social structures, and changes in laws? How about its non-partisanship with respect to candidates?

Albrier: Beginning in the forties, when women became more active in politics, that opened up the doors of the league to become more active on issues in the different cities in which they lived. Then they opened up their membership, which took in other women of other races--citizens. And they took in all the citizens who wished to join and become active. They encouraged them to do so. When they did that, the different citizens of different races served on different committees and could serve as officers. Unfortunately, not many of them felt they had the time to give to serve as an officer. To work in the League of Women Voters, it takes women who have time. A great many of the women who became members were members who were employed. They did not have the time to give what was required. They would attend meetings, especially in the evenings, and on afternoons when the children were in school, and that way, the league was able to take in the different races and groups of women who hadn't been active before.

Chall: Do you feel that the league's method--

Albrier: Before, the league was a kind of secluded organization of brilliant top women in the community.

Chall: In its method of studying and carefully looking at all sides of an issue before taking a stand, do you consider that a good one and useful to the community?

Albrier: Yes, definitely. The league has a definite place and has done so much in the different departments in analyzing government and setting policy in the government--the governments of the cities. They have been quite an asset because the women in the league have time to study and do research that a great many of the men don't have the time to do. They are a great asset all over the United States and the government. I think they're responsible for the government being what it is today, and for having such a variety of activities and a variety of viewpoints in government, as we have.

The Young Women's Christian Association

Chall: What about the YWCA here? I came across something in your scrapbook which indicated that at some time--I had to guess at this, but I thought it was about 1941--that you had a meeting of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Dining Car Workers Local 456, and you were the president, when this auxiliary held its first "racial tea at the Oakland Uptown YWCA." This is an article from the Post. [May 1, 1965:4]

Then I have something else here, that in February 1941, there was an annual meeting at the Linden Branch of the YWCA and you were on the nominating committee. There were other members of the board--I'm not sure how many of them were black and whether it was a mixed board at the time. I was wondering whether the YWCA here in Berkeley and in Oakland were as segregated as they were in other parts of the country at that time?

Albrier: Does that article have a date on it?

Chall: The one about the Linden--the annual meeting? February 6, 1941. The other one, with respect to the Ladies Auxiliary, that didn't have a date because that came out of a long article about you in the Post of 1965. I think they just mentioned it, but I don't think I picked it up someplace else.

I'll look again. I think I did see something in your scrapbook. I just wondered about the YWCA and you.

Albrier: That first one was 1941?

Chall: That was my guess. It may have been earlier. I thought it was 1941. I know the second one was 1941.

Albrier: It was in the forties, yes.

Chall: The Linden branch was definitely 1941.

Albrier: One was the Ladies Auxiliary had an affair at the Y.

Chall: At the Oakland Uptown Y, it was called.

Albrier: Does that have a date?

Chall: No, that's the one I'm not sure about the date. The other one is the Linden Branch annual meeting. That was 1941. That's for sure, 1941.

Albrier: It must have been '43 or '42.* In Berkeley, there was no YWCA. We had no YWCA in Berkeley at that time. In Oakland, there was the main YWCA that's there now, and they're white. And there was the YWCA for blacks on Linden Street.

Chall: So the Linden Branch was a black branch.

Albrier: The Linden Branch was a branch for the black people.

Chall: Linden Street being where?

Albrier: Linden Street in West Oakland, on Linden Street off Eighth Street.

Chall: West Oakland. Okay, I've got it.

Albrier: But the Y at that time had mixed members on their board. The black Y worked with the YWCA, but they had a separate Y for black people and a separate director. We, in the Y, for many years, in the thirties when we started out fighting against discrimination, challenged the Y at every convention that they had, every national convention. The men did the same thing at the YMCAs, white and black. There were many white women and many of our Y members in Oakland, would challenge, with the blacks--when we went to the national convention--the idea of using the letter C for Christian and being discriminatory, until they broke and discarded their national articles in their constitution and by-laws that said white only.

Chall: How long did that take? Do you recall?

Albrier: It took a good many years. Then the YWCA in Oakland--the director came back, Miss [Helen] Grant was her name--and she was the one who fought so vigorously against discrimination. It was always her dream that we would have an interracial Y in the Bay Area. Berkeley did not have a Y at that time--a YW. So, when she came back, she opened the doors of the YWCA to activities of black people. They could rent the Y for parties, meetings, and like that. Before they couldn't, because those doors were closed due to their racial policy.

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*Mrs. Albrier was close. A recheck of her scrapbook established the date of the Auxiliary's tea. It was reported in the newspaper edition of August 26, 1944.

Chall: So it was when Helen Grant came back, you were able to have your Ladies Auxiliary meeting?

Albrier: The Ladies Auxiliary was going to have a tea. I helped break down that discrimination and open the doors of the Y and show them that they had discarded that policy.

Chall: That was after Helen Grant came back?

Albrier: Yes. It was about two years after, before they did it, because we were about two years old, then.

We had our first annual tea of the Auxiliary because we were just--at the time it was done, we weren't organized. The Auxiliary wasn't organized as firmly.

Chall: So that was the early time of your presidency, and also of the Y's new policy. So that was a really important occasion.

Albrier: After we had the tea, then other women's organizations, blacks, came, you know, and procured the building--their large rooms for teas and meetings, that they wanted to have.

Chall: Did black women ultimately get onto the YWCA board?

Albrier: Yes, they were on the board before; they could serve on the board and on committees.

Chall: They just couldn't use the building.

Albrier: There would always be at least one or two black women from the Linden Street YWCA on the board. That's where you see we were electing a member from the board.

Chall: Did you serve on the board of the YWCA?

Albrier: No, I never served on the board.

Chall: The nominating committee?

Albrier: Just the nominating committee.

Chall: I guess the Y has come a long way since then. I think I saw that you were on the South Berkeley Center YMCA Advisory Committee in '74.

Albrier: I am now, yes.

Chall: Are the Ys now completely integrated in a way that's satisfactory?

Albrier: Yes, I think they are.

The Red Cross

Chall: Now, the Red Cross. You told me about the Red Cross before and during the war, when you took some classes in--I think it was the Drivers Corps--that you did it just as a protest to show them that you intended to go through the course, but you weren't going to ask them for any special privileges afterwards. [Laughs]

I notice that later on in the fifties, you were sent as a delegate to the National Aquatic School for the Berkeley Red Cross, so I assume there were some changes in the Red Cross.

Albrier: There were changes in the Red Cross as there was in the YWCA. The Red Cross was very prejudiced. Our army and navy were prejudiced. We had a black army and a black navy. The men were separated. They did not stay in the quarters with the whites, and it was a definitely segregated thing. The Red Cross was too. The Red Cross was segregated in many of its activities.

When World War II came up, they didn't even want to take blood from black citizens. That came out at the time when some people wanted to be active, and who were militant. They called for blood and they knew that the boys would be needing the blood and if anything happened over here, the people would need it. So they offered their blood and they didn't want to take them. That brought confusion all over the country--from the president's office on down, when that happened--when black people were disqualified and politely turned away and couldn't give their blood in the Red Cross.

Then the call came that we didn't know what would happen in this country. We might be bombed. The Red Cross was the key organization to take care of the people. They wanted as many people as possible to know first aid because doctors wouldn't be able to get to you right away, and we needed the first aiders if we had a bombing, to be qualified to go in, and direct people, and to get the injured taken care of.

That was when I answered that call. The first call I answered in the Red Cross--I always wanted to belong to the Motor Corps. I wanted to be able to drive sick people and to do things like that which needed to be done. To join the Motor Corps at that time, you had to take the course about how to repair your automobile in minor ways. You had to know how to change a

Albrier: tire--or how, at least, to direct someone to do it--and how to put oil in your car, and put water in your battery, and to know ignition wires and spark plugs and if they were out of order--minor repairs of the car. So I took that course.

Chall: Yes, I remember you told me. [Laughs]

Albrier: I was one of the first women that went in to take the course. Then that qualified me to work in the Motor Corps. [1942] In the meantime, they didn't have enough cars donated for me to drive in the Motor Corps, and they requested that I take the first aid course while I was waiting.

I took all three first aid courses, even the instructor's course. By that time, they needed instructors to teach the rank and file of citizens first aid, because they didn't know what might happen. They might be bombed. That's when I became an instructor and started teaching first aid classes to the citizens. [1941-1944]

Chall: I've seen pictures in your scrapbooks showing you did that.

Albrier: I taught many first aid classes in the churches. At that time, everybody thought they should know first aid.

[end tape 8, side 1; begin tape 8, side 2]

Chall: What was the Aquatic School?

Albrier: The Aquatic School was a school where first aid instructors and others would go to have classes and seminars. It was all over the United States. Each chapter was to choose a person to go to this school. They chose me once to go to the Aquatic School as an instructor. [1951-1953]

Chall: Was that for swimming?

Albrier: First aid, and everything that the Red Cross gives.

Chall: To do with water? Having to do with drowning or water sports?

Albrier: Yes, it's called the Aquatic School, but it had all the other activities with it.

Chall: Then the Red Cross became fully integrated ultimately, is that it?

Albrier: Yes. Of course now it's fully integrated since then.

Chall: Were you one of the few, or only black woman that you would see in this area during your first course?

Albrier: I pioneered the way as being a black woman pioneer in the Red Cross in those activities.

Chall: When you went off to Aquatic School, did you find other black women there?

Albrier: Yes, from other states--other western states. There were a few.

Racially Mixed Women's Groups

The Berkeley Women's Town Council

Chall: What about the Berkeley Women's Town Council? You were the president of that from '72 to '74. That, I gather, is open to any interested person and includes representatives from women's clubs, civic organizations, hospitals, and agencies. What does that mean, the Berkeley Women's Town Council? That is what kind of organization?

Albrier: The Berkeley Women's Town Council was organized, I think they're about ten or twelve years old. Anyway, they were organized to organize women's clubs throughout the city in order to acquaint each club with the others' activities and exchange ideas and viewpoints.

Your club would register with the Town Council and pay the dues, and to each meeting they would send a representative of that club. For instance, I would be the representative of the Berkeley Senior Center. If the senior center had an affair, a luncheon or anything, I would announce it. Then I would give the activities of that center, as its representative. Each club that is a member of the town council has those privileges--to exchange ideas and their activities with other members, and to invite other members to their different activities.

Chall: Is that an integrating force in the community?

Albrier: Yes, of club women. They invite all of the women who have club activities to join the town council. That makes them stronger--the club work in Berkeley and the club activities in Berkeley.

Albrier: For instance, we have the Work Recreation and the YWCA. Every woman who is a candidate or is an elected officer is invited to become a member of the town council. And they are, because everyone joins the town council.

Chall: How often do they meet to exchange views?

Albrier: They meet once a month, every month through June; they do not meet July or August. They start again in September to November; they do not meet in December.

[Insert from tape 10, side 1]

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Chall: "In 1961, a group of Berkeley housewives . . . " This is a quote from a paper. You can explain to me whether it happened this way or not. ". . . stormed the office of Representative Jeffrey Cohelan here today in a demonstration they hope will grow into a world crusade for disarmament and peace. These women said they were undefined and unorganized, but they hoped their efforts would spread across the country and to the women of Russia. They supported President Kennedy's position in his speech on peace before the United Nations. Frances Albrier and Mrs. Allan Temko were spokesmen. Forty-five names are on a petition bearing excerpts from President Kennedy's UN speech." What were you doing that day?

Albrier: That was a group of members and women. Most of us belonged to the organization called the Peace and Freedom--

Chall: Peace and Freedom party?

Albrier: Yes. No, it's not a party; it's an organization.

Chall: Is that the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom?

Albrier: Yes. Most of us were members who went to see Congressman Cohelan and to get his support. At that time, we all were against the Vietnam War. We thought that war was the wrong type of war for us to be involved in. We were trying to use our strength against that war and to promote peace and freedom. We felt, and we knew then, that if we didn't, we'd be destroyed. Because they would have just what they have now--those bombs, neutron bombs, and all of those bombs that would destroy people, and the nations.

Albrier: I read the Bible quite a bit. I know a lot of the Bible, and the Bible says that man would destroy himself. God would not destroy him. He would destroy himself. So I always pray that God would intervene and not let man do it. Because the way it's going now, it's what he is doing. He's destroying himself in all kinds of ways: polluting the air, polluting the water; and doing all those kinds of things because he thinks that he's so wise.

So that's what that group of women was trying to get--the congressmen, and support the congressmen in the peace movement. And against the Vietnam War. To end it as soon as possible.

Chall: Had you been a member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom very long? When did you join?

Albrier: I had been in a number of years. I forget when I joined. But I'd been in about five or six years. I haven't had time to keep up with it now; I haven't been active with them lately.

Chall: Were you active during the Vietnam War period when this group was most active?

Albrier: Yes.

Women, Peace, and Social Change

Albrier: Though I do think that to save the world is going to take the women of the world. If we could get the women of the world to get together, all nations, for peace, to end this war syndrome that they have. The women of all the nations--African nations, European nations, Russia, all--because we don't want to see people destroyed, which they will be.

Chall: Do you think women are more pacifist than men by nature?

Albrier: Yes, I think they can be in a way, and they can be more activist. They can advocate. I think they can go into the field of advocacy for anything and succeed at it more than men.

Chall: How come? Why do you think that?

Albrier: I think it's women's make-up and build to save people, to save lives. Men think of making money, building houses, and nations, and streams more so than women. Women can see farther. They have more spiritual feeling and more spiritual sense of history

Albrier: and what's happening than men. They can see farther. I think they have that gift from God.

Chall: When you were active in the NAACP and in politics, and in some of these other organizations where there were both men and women, did you find that women were accorded the same consideration of their views as the men were?

Allbrier: In the NAACP? Yes.

Chall: They were.

Albrier: I think all the men in the NAACP, in their offices, for one thing, they listened. They listened to women; they didn't bypass them. They listened to what they said, whether they believed them or not. Many believed them and tried to help put into effect what they were trying to do.

Chall: What about the Democratic party?

Albrier: The party? We have all classes in the party, but--

Chall: Generally. It might have been different--

Albrier: At times, women had to stand up for themselves. The men looked at them at the party as doing the work, running the offices, doing the leg work, and they [the men] going into the office.

But they have changed that now since the women have become more organized and have shown that they wanted to share being in some of the offices, and controlling the government, and making the policies of the government. I've seen that change. That's one of the changes I've seen since I've been active in the party.

Chall: Are you an advocate of the Equal Rights Amendment?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: One of the women whose name I've run across in the press--which is a rather unusual place for a woman to get to the top--was Charlotte Bass. I've also seen it spelled Charlotta.

Albrier: Charlotta, yes, Charlotta Bass.

Chall: She was an editor of the California Eagle for many years and there are very few women editors.

Albrier: She developed that paper in the early years. She went through the struggles of being a woman and a woman editor.

Mrs. Albrier At The GOP

Mrs. Frances Albrier, prominent Berkeley civic and club leader, was named this week to represent Dr. Rosa Gragg of Washington, D.C., president of the National Association of Colored Women's clubs, as speaker on the Republican Platform Committee at a meeting to be held Friday, July 10, at 3p.m. in the Cosmopolitan Room of the St. Francis Hotel.

As Dr. Gragg's representatives, Mrs. Albier will speak on the proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution dealing with rights of women. Mrs. Albrier is a former State Legislative Chairman of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs.

Sun Reporter 7-11-64

SAN FRANCISCO

Negro Historical & Cultural Society

Affiliated with the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History

Invites you to attend a
PUBLIC ADDRESS

Mrs Charlotta A. Bass

FORMER EDITOR & PUBLISHER, "CALIFORNIA EAGLE"



"The History of the California Negro's Fight For Dignity & Equality"

(Lecture on the fight for freedom by California Negro Americans)

Mrs. Charlotta A. Bass, a graduate of the public schools of Providence, R.I., attended Pembrook Hall, a college for women, in Providence; has taken courses in journalism from Columbia University and the University of California.

Mrs. Bass came to California in 1910 from Rhode Island and chose as her profession, the finest weapon for helping the oppressed, the voice of the newspaper. Working from the bottom of the ladder to the top, she perfected her talents and became a strong, unfearing voice of and for the people that advanced the cause of Civil Rights. She became owner and publisher of the "Califomia Eagle", oldest Negro weekly in the West. She was one of the first women in the country to hold such a position.

When she changed her political affiliation in 1948 to join the Independent Progressive Party she became the first Negro woman to run for the office of Vice President of the United States. This decision terminated 30 years as a member of the Republican Party.

Mrs. Bass's fight against segregation has been a constant one. In the early 1920's she borrowed the slogan, "Don't Spend Where You Can't Work" from the "Chicago Whip" and organized Negro workers to open employment previously closed to minorities This laid the foundation for the present-day struggle.Outstanding is the first fight against segregation of Negroes in the Los Angeles City Hall. She led the fight for equal employment of Negroes at the Los Angeles County General Hospital in 1918. Years ago she organized the Industrial Council that finally ended in opening the doors of the Southern California Telephone Company to qualified young women and men of minority groups, in other than janitorial work.

In 1942 Mrs. Bass was the first Negro Woman to serve on the County Grand Jury. She has been affiliated with the Elks, Eastern Star, Federation of Colored Women, the Council of Africai Affairs, the Civil Rights Congress and the Half Century Newspaper Club.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON

FEBRUARY 7th, 1965

— 3:00 P.M.

BETHEL A.M.E. CHURCH

916 Laguna Street, San Francisco, California

ADMISSION FREE

40th ANNUAL OBSERVANCE OF NEGRO HISTORY WEEK

Chall: You were familiar with that?

Albrier: She paved the way for women in the newspaper world. She had many setbacks and heartaches, but she was very militant to keep on. Because she could see--I've heard her say she could see women developing newspapers and owning them and controlling them. It was only women who were going to put morality back into the light where it should be.

Chall: She believed that?

Albrier: Yes. And it could be done through the media and the press. She often spoke to women of the power of the press and doing these things, and encouraged them to write and to use the press, in the early days when women didn't think much about it, or were afraid to use the press.

Chall: She was a militant to the extent that she joined the Independent Progressive party in the forties and early fifties when there was that party here. I think she was the vice-presidential candidate, at one time.

Albrier: Yes. She became dissatisfied with the personnel in the Democratic party--both the parties then, and she felt we needed a new party in order to bring about some of the social changes that were being advocated.

Chall: You didn't agree with her about the Independent Progressive party at the time, did you?

Albrier: No, I didn't think we should destroy the party, or give up the parties that we had. We should make them be what we wished them to be.

Chall: Does Charlotta Bass stand out in your mind as one of the unusual women leaders you've met?

Albrier: Yes, she was.

Chall: Not many people really know about her, do they?

Albrier: No, but they know about her in southern California. A great many of them who just came to southern California didn't know her. She was one of the early pioneers who lived her day and passed on.

Chall: Was she much older than you?

Albrier: Yes, she was older than I was.

Chall: You would meet her at what kinds of affairs? Get to know her.

Albrier: When I went to Los Angeles, I always went by her office and talked to her, and she would come up here. I subscribed to her paper for a long time. She was one of the early pioneers, I can say, that laid the groundwork for women in the field of news and the press.

Chall: There's still not many of them.

Albrier: No.

[end insert from tape 10, side 1]

Negro Women's Clubs

The California Association of Colored Women

Chall: Now, the Negro women's clubs. You have had years of activity, mostly at leadership positions in the women's clubs. The first of them is the California Association of Colored Women. What did that organization mean to black women and what did it mean to you as a member and a leader in it?

Albrier: The club for black women starts back again with my grandmother and Mrs. Booker T. Washington in Tuskegee. Mrs. Washington was one of the women who started the Federation of Colored Women's Clubs. Those clubs are in every state. She organized in Tuskegee a Mothers Club, and my grandmother became a member of the Mothers Club. Often, I used to go to the Mothers Club with her, or else I would pick her up in the horse and buggy [laughter] when she attended these clubs. I saw the Mothers Club in many activities in Tuskegee: raising money for students who were unable to pay their way through school, buying some books for students, or clothing for students, or paying tuition fees for poorer students who couldn't pay.

In California there was the California Association of Colored Women's Clubs and I became a member. I joined one of the clubs that was a member of the state association. That was the Women's Art and Industrial Club.*

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*See National Notes, published by the National Association of Colored Women, Inc. Summer Issue, 1952, p. 9.

STATE MONUMENT

Club House A State Monument. Mrs. Frances Albrier, the retiring Pres., of the Women's Art and Industrial Club, and Officers presented their Club House to the 47th Annual Convention of the Calif. Ass'n of Colored Women's Federated Clubs, Inc., held in Berkeley, Calif., July 27-30th, as a State Monument. The Ass'n accepted. The Club House is located at 857 West McArthur Blvd. Under the leadership of Mrs. Chlora Hayes Sledge, who was the 5th Pres. of the Club, a lot was purchased. It was the dream of Mrs. Sledge to build a club house. Under Mrs. Lillie Wilkerson, the 6th Pres., a building was bought and placed on this lot. For many years the club rented the two flats. Presidents Justina Ross, Leezinka Cooper, Elizabeth Ridley, kept the fires burning towards making this building a clubhouse. During the Presidency of Mrs. Maud Norman, the upper flat was remodeled into two Apts. Pres. Candace Saddler changed and opened the lower flat into club rooms and started the club meeting in their own club house. Under the Presidency of Mrs. Frances Albrier, Officers and members paid the club's indebtedness and furnished the clubrooms, and opened the club house to be used by other clubs and organizations.

Chall: Why did you choose that one?

Albrier: Friends got me to join that one. Each club goes out for memberships. They felt they wanted me in their club; others did too, but I chose that club because I had friends in that club. That was the club that had a building they were going to use as a clubhouse. I was very much interested in that, because I thought we rather needed a clubhouse. It was pioneered and sponsored--the idea of that through Mrs. Cora Hayes Sledge.

Chall: Tell me about her. She was a very active leader in the black community at that time. Was she much older than you at the time?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Had she been here a long while?

Albrier: She'd been in the Bay Area a long while. Her husband was an attorney. She was active in the association, too. She was state president, and she was active in other organizations. She was active in the Fannie Wall Home. That was sponsored by the Association of Colored Women's Clubs. She served as president of the Home for twelve or more years.

Chall: You were active in Fannie Wall, too. I notice that you had gone on a membership campaign and achieved 100 percent. I guess that was the goal that was set. That was in 1941, so that was in the early days, I guess, of Fannie Wall.

Fannie Wall Home was a unique kind of institution in this area for a long time.

Albrier: Yes, Fannie Wall. There were no homes for children in the Bay Area, not even in San Francisco.

Chall: This is for black children.

Albrier: Black children, yes. Where mothers could come and board their children or give them day care in the Bay Area. Mrs. Fannie Wall and a few women started the home.

Chall: Did you know her?

Albrier: Yes. She and other women struggled to keep the home going for many years and then the California State Association took over the responsibility of running the home--of which she was a member--to help her with the home. Each year there were more children to

Albrier: be cared for. It became a monument of the California State Association of Colored Women's Clubs. That's when Mrs. Sledge came out here. She became interested in and was one of the directors of the home. For many years, the home struggled, and did not have enough room for the children that the mothers needed --to give them care while they were employed. But it was the only home in the Bay Area that did that. So, it happened that they had two sets of children. They had the boarding children that stayed there all the time. Then they had the day care children that only came in the daytime because their parents picked them up in the afternoon, after work.

Chall: It was an early day care center.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: It finally closed, didn't it, in the fifties or sixties, I guess.

Albrier: It closed in the sixties because--

[interruption while ringing telephone is answered]

Chall: We were talking about the Fannie Wall Home closing.

Albrier: Yes, it closed in the sixties, due to the freeway and the rebuilding of west Oakland. The board of directors sold the old building. In the meantime, the board became confused about what they wanted to do. They wanted to get another place. So the old Fannie Wall Home on Linden Street was closed. The home belonged to the Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, and they had deeded it to the Fannie Wall Association to be used as a home and day nursery. In the event they closed the home, it was supposed to revert back to the federation.

At that time, the board of directors sold the home to the -- it wasn't model cities--it was the urban development department of Oakland that had charge of taking over and rebuilding West Oakland.

Chall: Redevelopment--

Albrier: Redevelopment Project. The money was divided between the Fannie Wall Home board and the federation, and was put into banks--into escrow-- it went through escrow and then it was put in banks. The federation still has their money and they are proposing to have a club house. The Fannie Wall board bought another building on 55th Street [Oakland], which they had used as a home and then had to close again, due to some kind of disagreement about not having the right building for children, and getting up to those requirements that the city and state wanted them to have. Now, they are opening it up again.

Chall: Oh, are they?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Under the name Fannie Wall?

Albrier: Yes, it's still Fannie Wall. They have two mothers in there and I think about eight children. They take care of destitute children that the children's department has sent in there. They're still operating.

Chall: That's an interesting story. I know that was a long time important institution here for children and parents.

In the other activities that you did with the California Association, I notice that you wrote articles on women's employment in wartime for their bulletin. Then you were the state chairman for the Citizenship and Legislation Committee in 1949.

Albrier: During the wartime, women went into industry.

Chall: Yes, you told me that story.

What I've noticed is that you usually worked in the club here, in those areas that were important to you. You brought your experience to them, as you did with the articles on wartime employment.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Later on, when you were concerned about FEPC and other legislation, then you got into that branch of it, so that you could work on legislation and carry that story to the women.

Albrier: Yes.

The National Council of Negro Women

Chall: What is the difference between the goals, work, or the women members of the California Association of Colored Women and the National Council of Negro Women? Is there much of a difference?

Albrier: Yes, there's quite a difference due to their organization, due to the time they were organized. The Association of Colored Women's Clubs, that's national; then each state takes on its state name,

Albrier: like the California Association of Colored Women's Clubs. All of the states together make the national.

The National Association of Colored Women's Clubs was started back--about twenty-five years after slavery. Mrs. Ruffin [Josephine St. Pierre] and a great many other women in the East--Mary Church Terrell, Mrs. Booker T. Washington--got together and said they wanted to start an organization throughout the states to work with black women--to elevate black women, to teach black women, because so many thousands of them didn't know anything; hadn't been trained. Many knew only how to work in the fields, chopping cotton. In many states there were no schools. If there were schools, there were only three months of the year when they were opened for the masses of children, and youth. There were no institutions to inform and teach black women.

They just let them out of slavery when they knew nothing--only the work in the fields. It was started way back in that era--the Association of Colored Women's Clubs. Mrs. Bethune came up in that era with those clubs. She became the twelfth president of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs. Now they have state clubs in, I think, thirty-seven or thirty-eight of the states.

When Mrs. Bethune came on the scene, she worked with President [Franklin] Roosevelt and took a lot of her ideas to him. She worked in the NYA [National Youth Administration], appointed by President Roosevelt. She traveled throughout the country. She saw the need for another organization that would be different.

But that great need didn't come to her until the president was getting together the United Nations and people to work in the United Nations. There was no black representative woman appointed, or in the United Nations. She asked the president about that. He said to her, "Mary, if you want to get black women representatives in government organizations like that, you have to have numbers. You have to have many numbers. You have to have 700,000 to 800,000 women." Because the Jewish women were represented and they had thousands of women, because they had the organizations all over. He said, "You have to organize the black women, the Negro women, so they'll represent thousands if you want to go into government and be representatives in government." That gave her the idea of organizing the black women.

So she set out to do so. When she first organized them, she drew in women from the different fields. She drew in fraternal women. She drew in missionary women from the different churches. She drew in political women. There weren't as many of them as others. She drew in women from the Masonic Eastern Star and the Elks. She drew in the teachers and the women in labor. She got all of those organizations together, and with representatives.

Chall: So it was a representative type of organization?

Albrier: Yes.

Then she went back and told them, "I have these representative women--six, seven hundred thousand women as representatives now." She got the first woman, Edith Sampson, appointed to the United Nations. That organization that she organized was called the National Council of Negro Women.

Chall: It has definite programs for--

Albrier: It has a definite program to operate.

Chall: Has Dorothy Height been the executive director or president always, ever since it was organized?

Albrier: No, there's been three presidents before Dorothy Height. Mrs. Bethune, Mrs. Mason, and I forget the name of the other lady. But Mrs. Bethune was president for many years. After her were two other presidents; then Dorothy Height. She's been president for many years.

Chall: Is that a paid position like an executive officer?

Albrier: No, only expenses. They don't get any salary.

Chall: Miss Height has spent almost a lifetime--

Albrier: Yes, but Dorothy Height has held two jobs. She was executive director on the YWCA board. When she came out here to have a seminar for the YWCA, she would also have the council meet together.

Chall: That's a prodigious job.

Albrier: I think she's retiring from the YWCA now. Of course, the council paid her expenses.

Chall: Have you found that the work that you've done in the National Council has been stimulating? Is it different from what it is in the California Association of Colored Women?

Albrier: Yes, it's different. It takes up different needs. For instance, under Miss Height in the past few years, during the government's program of building housing and housing people adequately in the southern states, she visited Mississippi and there she met Fannie Lou Hamer, who was struggling in Mississippi to raise the standards of living for the black people there.

Albrier: It was through Dorothy Height and the organization--the National Council of Negro Women--that they went to the government and got so many thousands of dollars--I don't remember how many thousands--to build adequate homes in Mississippi in the city where Fannie Lou Hamer lived, and to build child care centers. The council worked a good many years there. They also established a large child care center in Washington, D.C. for blacks. They went into that type of work.

Chall: I understand they have a pig farm; at least, that's one of their activities that has to do with farmers in the South.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: When you were the president of this organization, it seemed to have been located in San Francisco. [1956-1957] Do you recall that it was a San Francisco branch of the National Council of Negro Women?

Albrier: The San Francisco chapter.

Chall: There was not one here, is that it?

Albrier: Yes, there was one here. There was an East Bay chapter and a San Francisco chapter.

Chall: How come you were the president of the San Francisco chapter?

Albrier: I was for many years as active in San Francisco as I was in the East Bay.

The San Francisco chapter was the first chapter that was organized by the National Council of Negro Women, by Mrs. Bethune herself in 1935. That's when she came out here with Dr. DuBois and several others for the United Nations--and Walter White when the United Nations was organized. It was when she was out here that she organized the San Francisco council.

The council over here wasn't organized until three or four years later. And I belonged to the San Francisco chapter, and worked with the San Francisco chapter. That's why they elected me that year to be president of that council.

Chall: I'm a little confused about the year 1935 and the United Nations. My recollection of the United Nations was that President Roosevelt was setting it up during World War II.

Albrier: It wasn't 1935; it was 1945, wasn't it?

Chall: Yes, about that--'43.

Chall: But Mrs. Bethune did actually found the National Council of Negro Women in 1935?

Albrier: Yes. In San Francisco. She founded the organization in the East--Washington, D.C. after the NYA and WPA were established.

Chall: So she must have been founding it for other reasons. It may very well have been President Roosevelt who encouraged her to do it, though.

Albrier: Yes, it was.

Chall: I notice you were a representative to a United Nations function in the early forties in San Francisco, I wondered how that had come about. I don't think I brought my note with me today.

Albrier: I was, and I was to make a tour of the United Nations at one time, too, for the chapter.

Chall: I see. So world peace has been one of their goals, too, as well as civil rights.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: One of your activities when you were president was to work with the Sun Reporter and the Urban League on a major citizenship project in the area, called the Citizen Education Project, which was used to get people registered and then to get them to go out and vote. And you sponsored, in connection with it, a political forum at Nourse Auditorium. The chairman was Dr. Goodlett of the Sun Reporter. That must have been a considerable amount of planning and work. That was October 14, 1956.

Albrier: In 1955 and 1956, there was kind of a lull in the citizenship activities. They were not voting, many of them, and not taking any interest in voting. We had any number of black candidates who were running for different offices, and we wanted to keep that interest up. So we organized different citizenship clubs and organizations, especially political, to get the interest of citizens in politics and in government, and to show them that a great many of their complaints could be remedied by their becoming involved in their city's and their county's government--that they were responsible for a great many of the things they were complaining about.

The people that were elected were elected by the people. And they were responsible to the people who were electing them to government. That was the idea of Dr. Goodlett in sponsoring the forum--seeing that more people became involved, especially in the black communities. Because after the war, there was kind of a lull.

Two letterheads and one flyer relating to Francis Albrier's work with National Council of Negro Women

National Council of Negro Women, Inc.

MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE, *Founder*
DOROTHY I. HEIGHT, *National President*

FRANCES M. ALBRIER
Public Relations Chairman
East Bay Council
Past President, San Francisco Council
1621 OREGON STREET
BERKELEY 3, CALIFORNIA

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION PROJECT
sponsored by the
National Council of Negro Women
and the
National Urban League

FRANCES ALBRIER, PRESIDENT
HEADQUARTERS:
1914 FILLMORE STREET SAN FRANCISCO 15

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION PROJECT

Announces Its Second Phase of Activities:

VOTERS EDUCATION

PROS & CONS OF ALL ISSUES

STRUCTURE of STATE GOVERNMENT

☆

Sponsored by the

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NEGRO WOMEN

NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE

HEADQUARTERS:

1914 FILLMORE STREET

It takes a lot of Living—
To Make a Solid Citizen

A Voteless People
Is a Hopeless People

San Francisco Examiner Sept 29-1956

Nonpartisan Groups Help Get Out Vote

By CLAIRE LEEDS

THERE was the gocery clerk who had las voted in 1952 and did no know he had to re-registr to go to the polls in November.

There was the college coed who was going to reach her twenty-first birthday between the close of registration and election day but did not know she was eligible to vote.

There was the timid grandmother who had come from a State where Negroes are prevented or discouraged from voting. "Who'll miss my vote?" she shrugged.

PEOPLE LIKE these — at least 1,500 of them did register and probably will vote in November, thanks to the efforts of the San Francisco Council of Negro Women and the National Urban League.

With funds provided by the Urban League, and volunteers mobilized through the Council of Negro Women, San Francisco is one of four major cities selected this year to conduct a non-partisan pilot project in citizenship education among Negroes.

During their voters' registration drive, the Negro women: 1) Formed a picket line along Fillmore Street, carrying placards urging every one to register. 2) Conducted street interviews, briefing potential voters on registration rules. 3) Personally escorted reluctant persons to registration points. 4) Organized a motorcade with loud speakers to canvas the Western Addition and Bayview districts.

NOW THEY have entered the second phase of the program—getting out the vote.

"We are not for or against any candidate, or any issue," explained Mrs. Floyd Green Allen, director of the project. "We want people to vote, and not vote blindly, but according to their own convictions."

Council members will set up a voting machine at the project's 1914 Fillmore Street headquarters and they will provide instruction in its use. They plan a series of evening programs at which speakers from the League of Women Voters and from Bay area universities will present ballot pros and cons, and Candidates' Nights with speakers representing both parties. First of these programs is set for Friday, October 12.

Two distinguished Negro leaders will address a forum sponsored by the Citizenship Education Project and the Sun Reporter newspaper on October 14 at 3:30 in Nourse Auditorium. They are Assistant Secretary of Labor J. Ernest Wilkins and Congressman Charles Diggs of Michigan.

THE PROJECT will climax on election day with house to house canvassing and distribution of buttonhole tags reading: "I Have Voted. Will You?" Teen-age members of the Junior Council of Negro Women will baby sit at the project's headquarters.

Although most of these operations will be concentrated in the Western Addition area, the council's 110 members who live in all parts of the city have also been extending the Citizenship Education Project through neighborhood churches, clubs and recreation centers.

Assisting Mrs. Allen are Mrs. Frances Albrier, Council president and Mrs. Joseph D. March, past president.

Sorority Forum

BETA SIGMA CHI sorority will have its quarterly forum on Sunday, October 7, in Stockton, Mrs. Robert Swadley, chairman, announces.

Featured speaker, Albert H. Wood of Los Angeles, manager of the Western Insurance Information Service, will discuss "Women's Stake in Traffic Safety." Another speaker, Mrs. Muriel McLaughlin, will give a talk on publicity techniques. The 10 a. m. meeting will be held at the Stockton Golf and Country Club.

Beta Sigma Chi has more than 500 members from Bakersfield to the Oregon border.

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Albrier: One reason was that there were so many new people coming into the community.

Chall: From the newspaper accounts of that meeting, it looked as if whatever national black figures were on the scene, even in the Eisenhower administration, were brought here to speak. And prominent local blacks. There was the beginning of an attempt to show that there were blacks in areas of power and there could possibly be more. It looks as if there'd be a lot of work to get something like that set up.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Did you work much with the Urban League? Did you find that they were helpful?

Albrier: Yes, they were helpful. They were in employment. We had to help them in getting people employed; get them in the atmosphere of employment; attitude of employment; getting trained. Because a great many of them weren't trained in different vocations that they wanted to work in.

Out of that idea, came--through the city's government--the Skills Center. The Skills Center has been going on ever since. We now send a great many young people there to be trained.

Chall: That was an Urban League project?

Albrier: Yes.

The Debutante Balls

Chall: You weren't then the president of the National Council of Negro Women, because this was now 1966 to 1968. But the council chapter wanted to have a debutante ball for girls who could never have afforded to have been debutantes ever.

Albrier: That was the San Francisco national council.

Chall: And you were very active in helping to establish this Debutante Ball for these young girls who would need to be sponsored by at least $100 from somebody who would care to sponsor a girl. The girls had to be poor but have good scholarship and good health habits, and all that sort of thing. I notice that, I guess it was the first one, was held in the Sheraton-Palace Hotel--twenty-two

Chall: girls. Then a couple of years later, it became difficult to have these. I wondered what happened to it. Was it a good idea? Did you fight with the Links people over it?

Albrier: Did that have a date?

Chall: Yes. The first one was 1966. The second one was 1967. I think 1967 was the--

Albrier: --last one.

Chall: Yes, 1967 was the last one. Here's a picture of all the girls.

Albrier: '66 was the first.

Chall: It lasted what--a couple of years only? Or were there more?

Albrier: For many years, the Links had a debutante ball. Usually, those debutantes were girls whose parents or fathers were usually professional or in business. It was very expensive to belong to that debutante ball, because they had many parties and they had a lot of expense. So that the average girl in high school couldn't afford to become a debutante. One of the members of the national council happened to make a kind of research in the schools. She had a daughter in the schools. She found out how much money it took for her daughter to be a debutante and she made a research to find out about the quality of the girls--their educational background.

There were any number of worthy girls who had made good grades and had become wonderful women, but whose parents could not afford to help them. So it came up to the National Council of Negro Women that if they could get $100 sponsors, they could have the deb ball. The members then sent out letters to the schools to get a list of eligible girls. We got permission from their parents.

The first ball was delightful. These girls have all made contributions to the community--they have good jobs, some are in professions. The next year the council office didn't want to take on the responsibility, but a few of us wanted to continue, so three or four of us took it on. We took the case to the public for sponsorship. It was a good ball. After that, no one else took on the responsibility, so the idea fell through. But it gave the idea to churches and clubs who continued to sponsor these girls.

I have a letter from a girl who is graduating from U.C. and who is planning to become a doctor--she wrote, "I was one of your debutantes." One of the ladies who trained the girls in her charm school passed recently.

The Post, November 16, 1966

ART AND INDUSTRIAL CLUB'S Past President and public relations chairman, FRANCES ALBRIER, announced that the nexy meeting will be held at their Club House, 857 W. MacArthur Boulevard, in Oakland, on November 17th at 8 p.m., and promises to be interesting and exciting with a guest speaker from the Oakland Art Museum. The public is invited to participate in the question-answer hour regarding the Museum.

Nov. 16 - 1966

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MEMO: TO SOCIALITES WHO CAN AFFORD IT. The San Francisco chapter of the National Council of Negro Women is looking for 24 socialites who can afford to be $100 sponsors for girls who will be presented in their Cotillion at the Hilton Hotel, on December 20, 1966. The girls are good students, of high moral standards with good potential, but are unable to financially pay for their presentation.



FRANCES ALBRIER

THE POST will later give proper credit to the San Francisco stores who are donating the debs' dresses, shoes and accessories, and to the modelling school donating free lessons to these worthy girls.

Those who can afford to be sponsors, telephone Mrs. Frances Albrier at 845-4772.

The Elks and the Eastern Star

Chall: Tell me about the Elks and the Eastern Star. As I see it, you were a member, a grand [assistant] director in the department of civil liberties, of one of the Elks groups. Was that a black Elks?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: For women? That was a women's auxiliary of the black Elks?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: How did you happen to get into the Elks?

Albrier: Through some friends who took in my membership. They were interested in me becoming an Elk because they thought I was always interested in civil liberties. They had a department of civil liberties at that time, so they wanted me to become a member so I could work in that department.

Chall: You did, of course.

Albrier: Yes. Which I did.

Chall: That's kind of ironic that there would be a department of civil liberties in the Elks organization, which even to this day, hasn't accepted, as far as I know, blacks into their membership.

Albrier: Well, that's the reason they have a civil liberties department. [Laughter]

Chall: But they didn't know you were boring from within. What did you do in this department?

Albrier: The civil liberties department was to take up anything that was discriminatory. At that time, we fought very hard with labor, labor organizations, where there was discrimination. Discrimination in housing. Just discrimination in everything. That was the work of the civil liberties. As the president told Mrs. Bethune, if you're going to work and fight it nationally, you needed numbers. So, the Elks is kind of--we call it a play lodge. It's a place where people like to have a good time, but it has its serious side, too. One of the serious sides was civil liberties.

Albrier: And the fight--a great many of those chapters and lodges were state lodges in the South, where they had all kinds of prejudice. At that time, they really lynched and burned people in the South. That brought on organizations like the Elks civil liberties. It was a continual fight against discrimination and the things that happened to people.

Chall: You were able then, through the Elks, to reach a different group of people than you would, let's say, in these other women's organizations. Reaching into a different population of women?

Albrier: No. It was a black women's organization in the black Elks. It was to keep them active and informed on civil liberties. Like the women in California and Oregon and the western states, we would give funds--send funds back to those in the South, who needed funds for different activities. For instance, if the civil rights and civil liberties department there put on a program to encourage blacks to vote and to go and register to vote, they would pay the fare of some civil liberties person to go to Mississippi and to Georgia and to Louisiana, to talk and to work with the people, and to encourage them to vote.

Chall: Was this before the major civil rights struggle?

Albrier: Yes. It all led up to Martin Luther King. All of these struggles were going on before then in different organizations. Very quietly, but they were going on. The Elks civil liberties program was one of them. They don't have that program now in the Elks organization.

Chall: Is there still a black Elks organization?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: And they don't have civil liberties anymore?

Albrier: No. Judge Hobson Reynolds of Philadelphia was the one that headed the civil liberties department. He's the director now of the Elks lodge throughout the United States.

Chall: Are blacks trying to get into the Elks organization without any prejudice? I mean trying to integrate it?

Albrier: No, I don't think the blacks have bothered too much about integrating into the white Elks. The Masons havent' bothered about integrating into the white Masons, because they have their own.

Chall: I see. They're satisfied.

Albrier: They're not bothered about going in. They're all friends. They all exchange ideas. But there's never been any drive to integrate those lodges.

Chall: So it's a fraternal club they're perfectly willing to have with the name Elks, is that it?

Albrier: Yes. There's the International Order of Elks.

Chall: Brotherhood of Elks?

Albrier: Brotherhood of Elks, yes.

Chall: And the Eastern Star? I notice that Mary Bethune was an Eastern Star and I came across the fact that you were, too. What did that mean in your career here?

Albrier: The Eastern Star was a fraternal lodge. Those lodges were built and organized in order to help people and help each other--binding neighbors together. My grandmother was an Eastern Star and she always told me she didn't care about other lodges, but she always wanted me to be an Eastern Star. Because that was an organization on the lines of Christianity. That appealed to her--which it is.

Chall: It's Masonic.

Albrier: Yes. In those days, people didn't have the wealth they have now. They had to help each other. If a person was sick, they would go to their homes and stay with them all night and help take care of them. If they needed the laundry done, they would take the laundry home and do it. They helped each other like that. Those organizations came up on the idea of need and helping each other.

Chall: Was the Eastern Star here the same kind? Did you get the same satisfactions out of it?

Albrier: Yes. They have a burial fund and sick fund, for people who are sick; they have their fraternal fund, their grand lodges where they meet and have their organization. They have communication; recreation, and it is a vehicle of communication.

Chall: Are you active in it at all?

Albrier: No, I'm not active in them any more. I just remain a member.

Chall: There's a limit to one's time.

Albrier: Yes. I became more active in the other organizations--political and welfare organizations. There was one thing about being active in those fraternal groups: you get the ear of so many people. For instance, anything with civil liberties that came up that we thought people needed to know about--all I would do was go to the lodges--community groups--or write.

Due to the black citizens of this country being discriminated against, segregated to themselves in housing, organizations, employment--excepting the precious few who were militant and the white citizens who fought injustices against human beings--black citizens were in a world of their own struggling to survive and expand.

[Insert from tape 9, side 2]

Eastbay Women's Missionary Fellowship

Chall: What about the Fellowship Missionary Women of the East Bay whom you were associated with, back here in the mid-forties? This group invited women from white missionary societies to be their guests to discuss Christian citizenship and Christian friendliness. What was that all about? And who were these missionaries?

Albrier: I should have looked that up. There are names that I want to remember there.

Chall: I didn't catch any names, but I can find them, I think.

Albrier: Out of our East Bay Women's Welfare Club that we had, we had quite a few discussions on religions. In that club were women who belonged to all of the churches: Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostals. They were more prominently Baptists and Methodists.

Chall: The East Bay Women's Welfare Club?

Albrier: Yes. It's on your pink sheet.

Chall: I see. The one that I took.

Albrier: No, that was Little Citizens.

Chall: I think I have a card on the welfare club.

Albrier: Yes, East Bay Women's Welfare Club. We were the ones who started the fight about teachers in schools.

Chall: Of course, I've got it clear now.

Albrier: I've been in so many activities, I get all confused and mixed up.

Chall: You haven't done too badly. I don't think you've been mixed up, except this time.

Albrier: We all met in a meeting to discuss some community problems. I forget what it was. It came up that we'd bring it up into the missionary societies.

Chall: I see. Each church had a missionary society?

Albrier: Yes. The Baptists and the Methodists, each one. Mrs. Althea Paul and Mrs. Bell, who was the Pastor Reverend Bell's wife, of North Oakland Baptist Church. Mrs. Paul was a member of the Progressive Baptist Church. I was a Methodist, and there were several Methodists in the room at the time. We discussed the role of missionaries.

It was a white woman who taught public speaking around the neighborhood--she was a member of the Baptist church in Berkeley, I forget which one of them. She made a remark that she felt that all the people could get together because her gardener told her certain things, and the maid who came to clean her house was black, and she said certain things; and she felt that we all should get together.

I agreed, I felt so, too. "How many black people have you met? Have you met many black people in the churches? Black women who were working?" She hadn't met many of them. She only knew what her maid and her gardener said. I said, "That's it. You have not had the right kind of communication that you know what the black people think and what their religions are. You only see through the eyes of your maid and your gardener. Have you met any of our professionals? Any of our doctors? Any of our teachers? Any of our nurses? Any of our business people? And asked them, or discussed with them, issues and what their opinions are?" She said, "No."

Then we decided to have this community-wide missionary fellowship of all churches, where all the women would get together and have meetings and have discussions, so we could understand each other. Out of that was born the Eastbay Women's Missionary.

Chall: I see. That's how it came about.

Albrier: So we set our first meeting and everyone of us was to invite the missionary women of all the churches. Letters went out to all

Albrier: of the churches. That meeting was at the Methodist Church, the Fifteenth Street AME Church, a black church--one of the pioneer churches. All of the women--white and black women, got together in this missionary fellowship. We'd discuss the teachings of Christ and how we should take those teachings and communicate and be very skillful in getting the message over to other people, and to work with them and be friends with them, because we had lost the idea of Christianity, if we don't do that.

After that meeting, the women were very much excited and enthused about getting together, and that was the beginning of the Missionary Women's Fellowship. We met in all of the churches, black and white.

Chall: You just met as women, though. You didn't go to each other's churches on Sunday, did you?

Albrier: We'd invite them if they wanted to come. Some of the women did come to the other churches.

Chall: How long did that fellowship last as an organization, or is it still going on?

Albrier: I don't think it's going on now. It lasted about four, five years. I became active in something else and couldn't go to the meetings, but I attended it about four years. We would take on different subjects and projects. I remember it was through the fellowship that something was started that I was very proud of. That was after the war, we had quite a few people who worked in the shipyards. They became stranded, because they used up all the money they had, and they still wanted to live in the Bay Area.

During the Depression days, when I was working as a case worker, we had--and the NYA became involved, that was the National Youth Administration--there were a great many young people, especially young men, going to camps and they were sending them to these camps to rebuild their bodies and get them out in the open and give them camp life. A great many of them didn't have the clothing to go.

We only had two churches that had storerooms and sewing rooms where we could send these boys to get clothing. That was the Seventh Day Adventist and the Catholic churches. The other churches didn't have the sewing rooms and have the storerooms. I remember sending some boys. They came back and showed me what they had. They had nice corduroys that had been washed and ironed and buttons sewn on; and jackets and shirts. I said what a wonderful thing this is. Every church should have a storeroom. But I never thought of how I could get that across.

Albrier: I got it across by telling the missionary fellowship with all of these women, that they should go back to their churches and have a storeroom. For instance, if you heard of a family in need, you didn't have to go beg. You'd go in the storeroom and you had the clothing. I said if you made jellies and jams, give a few jars of fruit for your storeroom in your church. When you have money, have a money box so you can go out and buy the needs of a family.

You can outfit this whole family from your storeroom in your church. We can never tell whether we'll get in a Depression again or not that we'll need the church; the missionaries in the church can give that type of work and help to the community. All of them went back and advocated a storeroom in the churches. Any number of the black churches--still have their storerooms going.

Chall: That's good. There's always somebody in need somewhere.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: What did you think of the Church of All Peoples that Howard Thurman organized, I think in San Francisco, and maybe in Boston too?

Albrier: That's a church that takes up the people who don't like sectarianism, but they just want to be in a church. They believe in God and they believe in their fellow man and they can be taught the spiritual side of life that they crave. There's a great many of our young people who that appeals to. They don't want to associate with the Baptists or the Methodists or those sectarians like that. They want to be free and open. They love God, love their fellow man. They have a spiritual side they wish to develop. That's the type of church that Dr. Thurman sees and has organized, which has helped a great many people.

[end insert tape 9, side 2]

Men and Women Working Together

The Negro Historical and Cultural Society

Chall: Through what group did you set up the window displays for Negro History Week?

Albrier: At that time, when I set up that program in the stores, it was through the Negro Historical Societies.

Chall: With respect to the historical societies, you were also president, or chairman, of the later--

Albrier: San Francisco--

Chall: San Francisco Negro Historical and Cultural Society--their president in 1965?

Albrier: Yes, and it was then that I put the store window in the Emporium. There had never been anything about black history.

Chall: I think you accomplished that before you were the president. I have a note here that it was 1957 that you--

Albrier: I was vice-president at the time.

Chall: 1958, Capwells--a display in their windows. [Oakland]

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Then you did a tremendous amount of speaking all over on Negro History Week. How did you manage to pull all that together? It must have taken quite a bit of time finding the materials to display, and then getting the Emporium--the Emporium was the initial move. Once you got that down, it wasn't so hard, probably, to get the other store, but how did you manage to get the Emporium to agree to this?

Albrier: For many years, I belonged to the National Negro Historical and Cultural Society that was started in Washington, D.C., by Dr. Carter G. Woodson. Mrs. Bethune was one of the trustees of that society. I knew the people who were in the society. That society would always get up a history kit, and would send it out to us for display, with the pictures of different Negroes, like Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and all of those, for our displays and for Negro History Week.

I noticed in the Emporium store, and being one of their customers, one of their credit customers [laughs], I noticed that they had different displays in their windows. I noticed they had Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts, and different kinds of displays in a certain window. So that's when I got the idea, why not ask them if they would let me put in a display for Negro History Week.

First Historical Candlelight
Recognition Reception

EAST BAY NEGRO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Honoring

COMMUNITY "BUILDERS OF BRIDGES"

San Pablo Recreation Center

Park and Oregon Street
Berkeley, California

Sunday, March 3rd, 1968

4 to 7 P.M.

Honorees

Citation for Meritorious Community Service

Miss Ruth Acty - Education
First Negro Teacher, Berkeley Schools

Mrs. Virginia Stevens Coker
Research Law - State of California

Mr. C. L. Dellums
Equal opportunity field of employment
F.E.P.C. Commissioner, California

Mr. E.A. Daly - Pioneer Publisher . Newspaper

Mr. Jesse Ford - Pioneer Railroad Employee,
Community reporter

Miss Ida Jackson - Education
First Teacher, Oakland Public Schools

Mrs. Frankie Jones - Civil Rights, N.A.A.C.P.

Mr. C. B. Lenox, Pioneer Civil Rights N.A.A.C.P.

Mrs. Mary Cornelia Netherland
Pioneer, Native Daughter Civic Club

Mrs. Tarea Hall Pittman, Civil Rights N.A.A.C.P.
Pioneer Radio Commentator

Hon. William Byron Rumford
First Northern California Legislator

Mrs. Laura Toombs Scott
Pioneer Teacher of Music

Mr. Royal Towns - First Officer Oakland's
Fire Department

Mr. Morris Turner - Human Relations, Art and
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— P R O G R A M —

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The Occasion . . . . . Mrs. Frances Albrier
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The Black Arts Troupe - Oakland Civic Theatre
Mr. Robert Chambers, Director

Reading . . . . . Mrs. Marie Douglas

Presentations . . . . . Mr. Robert Sharp

Eugene Lasartemay . . . . . President Emeritus

Dedicatory Solo . . . . . Elena Lasartemay

Albrier: I went up to the director, they call directors of stores [laughter] --I went up to the manager of the Emporium. I asked to see the manager; I had to wait a little while and he saw me. I told him what I would like to do and like to see and if they did it, they would be the first store, and I guess the only store, because I hadn't asked any of the others to do that. I told him about a quilt that we had, the Frederick Douglass quilt, that had been made during the war years by a black and white historical society in Sausalito, and it was quite a work of art. I would like to display that in the window, if he would let us have the display for Negro History Week. He said, "We'd be very glad to do that." So I brought over all of the materials and things to put in the window, and he had his window display man arrange it.

Chall: Seeing pictures of it in your scrapbook, it looks impressive.

Albrier: So, then it came over here. The historical society that I belong to is over here. I knew Capwell's and Emporium belonged to the same group. I took the picture the Emporium had made--they gave the pictures to me--and I gave a copy to Capwell's, and they said they would do the same thing. Sure, they would be glad to have the display. There were several displays in Capwell's windows.

Chall: How did the black community feel about that?

Albrier: They were elated. They wondered how it was done; how I got it done, and did I have any trouble. They asked a lot of questions. But they were elated about it.

Chall: That was another pioneering step in the history of the black community.

Albrier: This year, they had a display in the Emporium. Also the Historical Society is called the Afro-American Historical Society now. They've changed the name.

Chall: I noticed in some article I was reading, that there's a regular building or room in Oakland. Do they have their own offices and building for their meetings?

Albrier: Yes. They have a store, where they display different pictures and history, and books.

Chall: How are they financed?

Albrier: Through memberships and donations.
[end tape 8, side 2]

De Fremery Recreation and Hospitality Center, 1942

[Interview 9: March 2, 1978]
[begin tape 9, side 1]

Chall: We never did talk about the opening of the De Fremery Hospitality House during the war for black soldiers and sailors [dedicated December 14, 1941]

Albrier: For servicemen.

Chall: Servicemen. How did it come about that you and others organized the Hospitality House at De Fremery Park?

Albrier: When the war first began, they sent out four hundred servicemen who were in the 495th Quartermaster Corps to Oakland. They helped build the Oakland headquarters for servicemen. What were those camps for servicemen called? They built all of the barracks and everything for a camp, for the area. Most of these men were from New York, Chicago, and the eastern states. It was just the beginning of the war, when they began to recruit men into the army and the navy at that time.

There were no places for them to have recreation, and we found that a great many of them were wandering up and down Seventh Street, going into the bars; some of them getting lonesome and getting drunk, and getting into trouble.

It was then that Joshua Rose, who was secretary of the YMCA at the time, and Reverend Brown, who was the pastor of the Fifteenth Street A.M.E. Church, myself, and other interested citizens, formed a committee to see what could be done for these servicemen to get them out of trouble, at the request of some of the railroad employees--the porters and dining car men--who were also disturbed about that. So we called a meeting of citizens in the De Fremery Park Club House to see what could be done. Out of that meeting we proceeded, from the city, to get the De Fremery Club House as a clubhouse for the men, and to use that building. The city set it aside.

It was during the WPA days, when they had workers that we could use through them to direct the clubhouse. One of them at that time was Attorney Tom Berkley, who was director. Marie Turner

Albrier: was director of the hostesses. But we had to organize it. We furnished the place and renovated it, and had clubrooms and recreation rooms, and an auditorium for dancing. Then we proceeded to form a women's group to get the hostesses and to get other women on the board of directors to give service. We had no money.

We started out with no money. We had in that group, Mrs. Walter Green, whose husband was a former serviceman--retired army captain, and Mrs. Mae Bondurant, who was Dr. Bondurant's wife. I'll have to come back with the other names.

Chall: I may find them in your scrapbook, too. Many of the names are there, underneath the pictures. I can look it up.*

Albrier: We started out that way and finally we got good publicity from the papers, and we had rag drive sales, and we had all kinds of sales. And we wrote letters to different organizations. One of them--I think you can see the letter--gave twenty-five dollars a month for the servicemen and their recreation at the time.

When we went to the camp, we found that at the camp, the captains, admirals, and other officers wanted us to furnish hostesses for their parties on the camp.

We found that they had organized a singing group, a quartet of servicemen. On Sunday mornings, I would take them to the churches and let them sing the spirituals and other songs. Then I would tell them we wanted the mothers to lend their girls and we would chaperone them. We would take them home, so they wouldn't be going home alone. Because they had sons and they didn't know when their sons would be going into the army and the navy, and they'd be in some city, lonesome, and nobody caring anything about them.

So we had to be kind to these boys and we didn't know how many we would have to serve. Anyway, we were getting to serve them. After that, after we were in service for seven or eight months, then USO [United Service Organization] came in. They were organizing. They came in and took over the same building.

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*Mrs. Ailia Washington, Mrs. R.H. Morrow, Mrs. May Hill, Miss Marie Turner, Mrs. Evelyn Jones, Mrs. Lanette Tinsley, Mrs. Hubbard, Mrs. Viola Dennis, Mrs. Gertrude Hill, Mrs. Nancy Pitts, Mrs. D.M. Tillman, Mrs. Ruth Larche, Mrs. Leona Wysinger.

Albrier: The USO had one for whites and one for blacks. But in our building, we had them all together.

Chall: Did you?

Albrier: Yes, the boys walked over those discriminatory lines. The white boys came in and we entertained them and treated them, fed them pies and cakes and whatever they wanted to eat, like we did the black boys. And the black boys didn't resent them, the servicemen. And they didn't resent each other--they were the type that just didn't resent each other.

Chall: That's interesting, because there was a color line drawn by the USO.

Albrier: It was a color line drawn, but it was beginning at that time, that that line was beginning to break and not being able to be held by the young people. A great many of the servicemen helped to break that line.

It was at the time, also, in the Democratic party, that we stressed to Truman about breaking the segregation and desegregating the army and the navy.

Chall: Which he did.

Albrier: Yes, it was through their efforts. A great many of those men went overseas together, and were in battle together. Some of the black boys saved the white boys and some of the white boys saved the black boys. They came back over here with that in mind, that they were going to do all that they could to end discrimination. The Red Cross would try to discriminate against them on the ships, those that were wounded. They'd say, "Listen, that's my buddy. My buddy helped save my life and I want his bed by my bed." Many of the white boys would say that, would make those remarks against discrimination and would insist that they still be with their black buddies and their white buddies overseas.

Chall: What was the general feeling in the black community about the Japanese at the time of the war--Pearl Harbor and the Japanese internment?

Albrier: The black community didn't have too much to say. They couldn't believe that the Japanese were going against this country, that they really meant to fight. The black community felt like they should have put the Germans, who were the ones who started the war--they should have been in concentration camps, too. And that they were segregating the Japanese--alone, by themselves--it wasn't fair. It should be both of them.

Albrier: But the Japanese and the blacks in the country, at that time, both were discriminated against. The Japanese never discriminated against blacks in their buildings, or their hotels, in their restaurants. They never discriminated against giving the blacks service--where the Chinese did. So the black community felt a little closer to the Japanese, although they couldn't understand that war period that hatred brings on, becuase they were in war against each other. Many of my friends and neighbors in this neighborhood were Japanese.

Chall: Yes, I remember you told me that.

Albrier: And the Buddhist church is just down the street from me, and I knew any number of the Buddhist priests and had talked to them.

My son, Albert, wanted to take up and become an engineer. He could not go to school here as an engineer and take those classes. One of his Japanese friends told him the Emperor was calling him and his brother back to Japan--and that was before the war began--to go into their military service. He said, "Why don't you go back with us? You can join the Merchant Marines and you can be a captain and an engineer there." There was no discrimination there.

It's unfortunate but it took the war to bring out a great many of those truths about people and human beings. So we served--I think it was ten months--the servicemen in the Bay Area before the USO came in and took over.

Chall: Then did you continue to act as hostesses, in the community? You didn't have to raise funds, but did you act as hostesses?

Albrier: No, the USO was fortunate in the Bay Area that they didn't have to start from the groundwork up. We had laid the groundwork and they just took over where we left off. We turned it over to them, because they had their directors and they were being paid through the USO. So far as the organization, it was all completed.

The PTA: Concerns With Schools and Education

Chall: Now, I noted in your scrapbook that you had membership cards to Longfellow PTA and McClymonds PTA. Those were the only ones. So I assume your children went to Longfellow School in Berkeley and McClymonds--was that the high school?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: That was in Oakland.

Albrier: That was in Oakland. My son went to McClymonds. He got a job in Oakland and he went to McClymonds High School.

Chall: Was he living in Oakland or was he just going to school there?

Albrier: He lived in Oakland. He got a job working with Mr. Baker, who was a mortician, and he lived with Mr. and Mrs. Baker. That threw him into McClymonds school district.

Education and Prejudice

Chall: I wondered why he went there. And the girls went then to Berkeley High School?

Albrier: They went to Berkeley High School. The youngest went to University High School. They all graduated from Longfellow and Burbank Junior High. Then both girls went to Berkeley High School, but the youngest girl became disappointed because there was prejudice among the teachers toward the black students.

The black students said they would not give them an A; they would give them a B. If they earned an A, the teachers would give them a B.

Chall: That's what they felt?

Albrier: Yes, that's what they felt. That happened. They would see white students who performed less in class than they did, and they would get an A. So the two girls became discouraged about that, and the youngest girl who was going to be a nurse, insisted--she had all of her studies outlined, grade by grade, and took those subjects, so when she went into the hospital, she had her algebra and her chemistry. That was done by a young teacher. When she went into high school, he mapped out all the subjects that she should take, grade by grade. And complete.

She said specifically that she did not want the teachers to give her anything, but she wanted what she earned. If she earned a B, she wanted it. If she earned a C, she wanted it. If she earned her A, she wanted it.

Then she chose to go to University High School.

Chall: Where was that? I don't know that. Is that in Berkeley?

Albrier: That was old Merritt College down here on Grove, below Alcatraz Avenue. That was University High School. Many of the students from the university came down and did their sub teaching in this high school. They graded the students through the university standards rather than through the high schools--their standards were very high. It was a girls' school.

Chall: Was it in the Oakland school district?

Albrier: It was run by the city of Oakland. When she transferred there, a friend of mine lived near that high school; so she stayed with her in order to get the residence requirement. She was very happy there. She said the teachers didn't give you anything; they didn't cater to you. But they did give you what you earned.

Chall: Were there other black students there?

Albrier: Yes, the majority were Oakland students, as it was an Oakland high school.

My other daughter finished Berkeley High. I told them something that has happened today. A great many of the students came here and they would all talk, and discuss problems. I told them to stay in Berkeley High. If those teachers were so rigid, or if through their prejudice, they made them study to get an A--and they earned an A, but they gave them a B--they were favoring them, because when they got outside of high school and they went to the university, they had to compete. They were stronger and more able to compete. If those teachers gave them a B and they hadn't earned a B, they were doing them a disfavor. Indirectly, they were favoring them. Most of them took for granted what I said and they stayed in Berkeley High and were not so discontented afterwards.

Now they're giving them grades that they don't earn. Passing them through and they can't read or write.

Opening Nurses' Training to Black Girls

Chall: That's what we hear.

What about your daughters? Did they both become professionals? Are they both nurses?

Albrier: Yes, they're both nurses. My younger daughter graduated from Highland Hospital. She was the third black girl that went into Highland Hospital's training. We had some problems in getting girls in training here into that hospital. Club women had to go to bat for that.

The first girl went in training before Highland was built. The hospital was out in East Oakland--Fairmont was the main hospital and the only hospital at that time, in the forties. The same club that you have material on--the East Bay Women's Welfare Club--and the Association of Colored Women's Clubs in the Bay Area--Miss Hettie Tilghman, who was one of the main leaders and pioneers in club work in the Bay Area--went to the supervisors and asked the supervisors about black girls going in training.

Chall: That's the Board of Supervisors of Alameda County?

Albrier: Yes. They had a Dr. Black, who had supervision of the health department, who kept them out and said that he wasn't willing to open up the training to Negro girls yet. He said that every year. So the next time they went to the supervisors, they had with them Walter Gordon, and Walter Gordon challenged Dr. Black and told him, "Now, we pay taxes and we support that hospital, and all girls who qualify and want to go in training should be accepted in training." He said to the supervisors, "You are elected and we may not forget that." Dr. Black said when they built a new hospital, which was Highland, he would consider black girls going in training and accepting them into training.

When Highland was built, the same group of women sent some girls out to apply and they were not accepted. So they went to the supervisors again. Again, they had with them Walter Gordon, who was then president of the NAACP. They decided to accept the black girls into training. But they did not know about them staying in the dormitory with the white girls. They decided that the black girls would stay home, and it cost the county forty-five dollars a month for a nurse's expenses. That included her laundry and her room, and other equipment that she needed--that the hospital gave. They would pay the black girls forty-five dollars and let them stay home.

There were two girls who thought that was quite a bit of money at that time. It was during the Depression. They thought about their families needing the money and how it would help their families. They enrolled and went back and forth home.

Albrier: We found out later there was discrimiantion all the way through. These girls could not go into the nice sitting room that was in the dormitory--off from the hospital--for the white girls who were in training who stayed there. We found out that the black girls had to get up as early as six o'clock in the morning because one lived in West Oakland, to get the bus on time, to get on the wards at seven o'clock. When she got out there, she met the white girls who were just coming out--they'd had a nice shower and been to a hot breakfast--walking through the glass-way halls to the wards to begin their work. We found out that their sitting room [for the black girls] was down in the basement. It was just a steamer rug and a chair, where they went to rest.

So, a bunch of women, not Miss Tilghman and the others--thought that they should wait a little while--but a bunch of club women got together and said, "We won't wait another year. We won't stand for those girls to be treated another year--who are going into the hospitals to be trained. They will stay in the dormitories where the other girls stay." They got hold of Dr. Black and they read the riot act to Dr. Black and told him they would get the community in behind it, especially the taxpayers.

When my daugher, Anita, went in training, she was assigned to a room. It was during the war period when they called nurses "cadets" and they had a uniform something like a cadet. She was assigned to a room all by herself. There were several girls, friends of hers that she met--one of them was a doctor's daughter who lived in Piedmont. I forget where the other girl lived. But these were white girls. All these girls had gone to school and around with each other. They were assigned to rooms together--some three or four--but Anita was still in this room by herself. This room was one of the instructor's rooms.

They wanted to know why and how come Anita rated so high that she was in a room all by herself and they were crowded up in rooms together [chuckles]. They said it was because Anita was a Negro girl and they didn't put the Negro girls in with the white girls. Those girls said, "We'll settle that."

They were in Anita's room more than they were in their room. There were two beds in there. They would get their lessons, and talk, and sleep, in the other bed with Anita to show them that they did not object to her. They gradually broke down some of that discrimination in the hospital.

Chall: Was Anita your older girl?

Albrier: No, she's the younger one. My older girl got her training... She married and lived in Monterey. She did a lot of Red Cross work. Some of the Red Cross officials advised her that she did

Albrier: such excellent work for the Red Cross that she should become a nurse. And she felt that she would like to be a nurse. She went into training at the Salinas County Hospital and graduated from that hospital as a nurse.

Chall: Was she married when she got her nurse's training?

Albrier: Yes. She lived at home on the weekends. Later, she was divorced from her husband.

Chall: Is she in nursing now?

Albrier: No. She's married to a colonel. She does some nursing in the hospital, on-call. Anita, the youngest girl, got her degree in business administration. She's now doing rehabilitation work for seven insurance firms and has her own business.

Chall: She graduated as a nurse first?

Albrier: Yes, she graduated from Highland.

Chall: And then got another degree in business administration?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Where did she take that?

Albrier: San Francisco State.

Chall: My, she's ambitious. Now she has her own business.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: She's the one I met here, then.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Where does your other daughter live now?

Albrier: They're in Fort Dix, New Jersey. They're stationed in Fort Dix, New Jersey.

Pride in Her Children

Chall: Do you think that your daughters were typical of black girls at that period when they were going through high school and considering their careers as they did? Were they typical of their age group, do you think?

Albrier: Yes. They were. They had a lot of activities. When they were going to school, there were activities. Some of the activities disturbed me because, at that time, there was an extreme radical element. They were invading the university and held quite a few activities up at the university. They would meet with this other element that I felt was a little too radical.

Chall: What did you do about that?

Albrier: I tried to steer them away from that. My pastor, Reverend Arthur Johnson, helped a lot with that. Finally, they weaned away themselves. It got too radical for them.

Chall: Have either of your girls followed in any way at all in your footsteps, that is, in terms of being active in the black community?

Albrier: Yes, both of them have. In fact, the boy is, too. They're very active and their action is in different lines.

Chall: But in civil rights.

Albrier: Yes, in civil rights.

Chall: What is the line of action each one has followed?

Albrier: They were interested in their school activities. Also, the boy was a Boy Scout and the girls were Camp Fire Girls and in the youth YWCA. The youth encountered discrimination and racism in their organizations as well as the adults. They, too, were active in civil rights.

In fact, all of the children, when I began to be active in politics, took a part in politics, too. That period, day and time, a great many of the kids were active. They were curious about it. They would sit and listen at Roosevelt's fireside chats and they would discuss it in school and in history classes. Then when we would have activities and were campaigning, they would do a lot of the stenciling work, ringing doorbells, and talking to people.

Chall: They haven't given it up, then?

Albrier: No.

Chall: Or turned against it?

Albrier: No.

Chall: When they were growing up, was there any concern on your part and on the part of your husband as to whether or not they would marry within the black community? Was intermarriage ever a problem?

Albrier: No, intermarriage never was a problem. Only myself and my husband felt--we told them that we felt they should marry within their own race because there would be a better understanding. The time hadn't come when we thought interracial marriages panned out very well, but later we felt that it would when people began to communicate with each other and to work with each other. But that day was to come yet. Although we said you cannot say who you might love; you love a person not because of their color. You're attracted in other ways to them. We wouldn't object to anyone they married. If we were to prefer, we preferred that they marry within their own class.

Chall: What about your grandchildren? Have any of them intermarried?

Albrier: No.

Speaking on Black History in the Schools

Chall: You did a great deal of speaking in the schools. I came across notices that you used to go out and speak on discipline in the home. Then you spoke on Negro history. When you came back from Africa, you did a tremendous amount of speaking, particularly the Oakland schools, but I think the Berkeley schools, too. You gave me that sheaf of envelopes yesterday that showed where you'd been. Why did you do all that?

Albrier: When my children were in school, I was active. After they were out of the Berkeley schools, I still remained active in the PTA. I think I spent twenty-five or twenty-six years in the PTA, being active in the membership and working with the PTA because I was interested in the children and was interested in what happened to Berkeley when we were desegregating the schools and having integrated schools. But before that thought ever came into the minds of people, I was active in the PTA. For a great while in the early twenties and thirties, the schools were integrated due to the small population of ethnic groups. They all attended school together where they lived.

I remember my grandmother helping me so much by being active in the PTA with the teachers and everything, and then in schools--helping and doing things in the schools. So I felt that if parents wanted to communicate with teachers and wanted to be a

Berkeley Daily Gazette, February 8, 1971

PTA Honors Mrs. Frances Albrier

. California Congress of Parents-Teachers' highest honor the Honorary Service Award, was bestowed on Mrs. Frances M. Albrier of Berkeley by the PTA's 16th District at its annual Founders Day Dinner held on Jack London Square, Oakland. The Berkeley community leader was one of two recipients so honored, the other being David Vickers, who is chairman of the Community Drug Council's Crisis Center in Newark, the city where he resides.

In presenting the award to Mrs. Albrier (it was known formerly as the Life Membership Award and carries with it a scholarship grant in Mrs. Albrier's name to be given to a student majoring in education), it was noted that the 72-year-old social worker was being honored especially for her work with the Intergroup Education Project in Berkeley, for which she served as membership chairman for two years; for her work since 1960 as a School Resource Volunteer and speaker on African culture both here and in the Oakland schools; and most particularly, for inspiring such interest in service to youth through PTA that she was responsible for reactivating a PTA unit at an Oakland junior high school.

The many other paths of service Frances Albrier has poineered besides the one's mentioned above would have taken all evening for the dinner's toastmistress to describe, as the Berkeley lady has devoted herself to a variety of major causes.

Born in Mount Vernon, New York and educated at Booker T. Washington School in Tuskegee, Alabama and Howard University, she came to Berkeley with her father in 1922 and has lived in the same house on Oregon Street since 1934.

Her late husband, Willie Albrier, was a bartender on the Southern Pacific's lounge cars, and during those years his wife was vice president of the Women's Auxiliary of the AFL Dining Car Cooks and Waiters Union.

Her interest in Berkeley schools and PTA began with her three children's entry into school. Her son, Albert Jackson, of New York, is now chief engineer on the hospital Ship HOPE, presently based at Jamaica; her daughter, Betty, is married to Col. Roy E. Kimball, USA, and living with her husband in Stuttgart, Germany; and another daughter, Anita Turner, resides with her husband in East Oakland. Mrs. Turner is a graduate nurse, and like her brother and sister, was educated in the Berkeley Schools, beginning at Longfellow, where their mother was the PTA's clothing room chairman.

During the thirties Frances Albrier was a Social Service caseworker for the state, and in 1938 she ran for a post on the Democratic Central Committee of Alameda County. She was elected and served as a Democratic Central Committeewoman for 18 years.

During the war years she was a welder at Kaiser Shipyards. At the same time she found time to work as a volunteer in the Red Cross motor corps, in USO, for the Fannie Wall Children's Home, Visiting Nurses Assn., and for the NAACP, who awarded Frances Albrier its prestigious "Fight for Freedom Award" in 1954.

As far back as 1938 when she ran for the Democratic Central Committee, she sought a ban on racial bans, and in 1939, Mrs. Albrier went to work in earnest to stop racial discrimination in the hiring policy of the Berkeley schools.

That year with other concerned women she formed the Eastbay Welfare Women's Club, a political non-partisan group, to press for hiring of non-Caucasion school teachers and other school personnel in this city. The club was composed primarily of mothers of Negro girls who had graduated as teachers from the University of California, but because of existing hiring policies could not secure employment as teachers in the Berkeley schools.

The women made a survey of these graduates who wanted to teach in their home city but were forced instead to go South, East or into the California valley if they wanted teaching positions. The survey in the UC neighborhood also showed that 5,000 non-Caucasion Berkeleyans owned homes and paid taxes there; so Frances Albrier's next step was to run for the City Council on a "No Taxation Without Representation" platform.

"There wasn't even a Negro or Oriental clerk or janitor in our schools then," she recalls wryly.

Mrs. Albrier piled up a respectable vote but she lost the election. That didn't matter. She had had the opportunity to talk to hundreds of people, and her subject was discrimination in hiring. East Bay Welfare Women's Club took the results of their survey, and their recommendation that the 14th and 15th Amendments calling for hiring on the basis of merit regardless of race and color be the new guideline, to the Board of Education and the Schools Superintendent.

Many conversations later, policy was changed and Miss Ruth Acty was the first Negro teacher to be employed in the Berkeley schools. The doors were opened, and the lady who is credited with opening them is Frances Albrier.

The determined lady also was instrumental in organizing picket lines at local business establishments where racial discrimination was practiced in hiring, and in 1961 she was spokesman for a delegation of housewives demonstrating for peace at Congressman Jeffrey Cohelan's soffice.

But Frances Albrier hasn't retired. Besides her daily duties at the Berkeley Senior Center on University Ave. where she is the Senior Community Representative working there under the city's Social Planning Committee, she continues her School Resource Volunteer work at all the Oakland schools and at seven or eight Berkeley schools. She began this program on her return from Africa where she attended Nigeria's Independence Celebration with her good friend, newspaperwoman Edith Austin. They visited Ghana, and Senegal, also, on that 1960 trip, and Mrs. Albrier uses the carvings and fabrics she brought back from those countries to illustrate her talks in the schools.

Her membership in the Assn. for the Study of Negro Life and History qualifies her well for speaking on another of her favorite subjects, "Famous Negroes."

The Berkeley civic leader's affiliations also include the National Council of Negro Women's Club, of whose Northern California Federation she has served as president.

Albrier: part of the schools, they should be active and take part in the programs. The PTA was one way of doing it, one way of keeping up with your children; and one way of helping the children by your communicating and helping the teachers, and being friendly with the teachers that were teaching them. And I felt that the teachers would feel closer to students where the parents were really interested.

Then in my neighborhood, there were a great many friends who were employed and they could not go to the PTA meetings. Sometimes, if it was evenings, they could. Otherwise, mostly with the fathers, they were handicapped. They were too tired to even go to a meeting. I felt that they couldn't sit up and discuss anything at the meeting, because they were just too tired, and they didn't go. A great many times, the mothers felt that way, too, when they came in after they had looked after their own home work. After being employed all day.

Chall: It is a long day.

Albrier: Then they would rely on me. I was the spokesman for a great many of the parents and would be troubleshooter between the parents and the children and the teachers. If the teachers had any trouble with those children, they would say, "Mrs. Albrier, would you check Johnny's mother and tell her he's naughty in school? He won't get his lesson. He won't obey. Will you convey to her that message and see what she can do about it?" And I would.

Chall: That was an important role you played, then. And the parents expected you--they relied on you, then, to help them?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Now then, when you went speaking, that was of course, at another period. This was a message, then, that you were carrying to the children about black history and their roots in Africa later on.

Albrier: I was surprised in the schools that very little was known about black history. Then I was surprised in talking to the parents, and those parents went to schools in the South--in the southern states--and they had had no black history. I guess I thought because I went to school in Tuskegee and had black history that all of the schools in the South where there were black children and black teachers, had black history, but I found out they hadn't.

I took a great deal of interest in black history in the schools, especially among the teachers themselves first, because

Albrier: when I would speak and talk about black history, the teachers became involved themselves. That's why they invited me to their classes.

Chall: So first you started with the teachers?

Albrier: I started with the teachers--with talking to them. And the PTAs. One PTA said,"Now we have black history month coming up" and I had this literature from the National Negro Historical Society in Washington, D.C., that was started by Carter G. Woodson, Mrs. Bethune and others--I had this literature and this data for Negro History Week.

Then I just had to start from grass roots up, telling them about Negro History Week, and why Carter G. Woodson started a Negro History Week. Why he first started that association in 1915; then why he started Negro History Week in 1926, because the black people in America had no history. They didn't know where they were from. They didn't know what part in history they played. They hadn't been taught the history of Africa and those countries. They hadn't been taught the history, and the part they played in this country. A great many of them had heard of Harriet Tubman. Some of them knew of her. They had heard of Frederick Douglass, but they didn't know too much about him. They didn't know what part they played in the government or anything.

Chall: So you just took it upon yourself to give them the background. Those were early days before anyone talked about black history except the historical society. It wasn't as widespread as it is today.

Albrier: No, the historical societies hadn't started when I started to talk about black history. I started that in the schools with my kids. I had taught my kids black history. They had read the life of Frederick Douglass; they had read the life of Booker T. Washington, and I had told them more than what they'd read. They had read the lives of all those people who worked: Mrs. St. Pierre Ruffin who started the black women's organizations, and why. I had all these books in the home here. And about the Indians--in their play when they would make sarcastic remarks about the Indians in the classes--my kids were on their feet, just like that.

The schools were just beginning to learn. The teachers themselves--the white teachers themselves, didn't know much either. They realized then that was a part of history that they themselves had been left out of, and that they didn't know. They didn't realize about John Brown and the slavery days, and the

Albrier: people who fought against slavery; the white statesman who fought against slavery and who was with Frederick Douglass. Mary Ellen Pleasant and all of those people that we have.

The Unforgettable Trip to Africa, 1960

Chall: When you came back from Africa, then you did a tremendous amount of speaking, too, on your experience, not only to the schools, but to all kinds of organizations around. That must have been a very exciting experience for you.

Albrier: Yes it was, because Africa was coming towards the forefront in all of the world as a country. Masses of people and countries looked at Africa as the dark continent; as savages and head-hunters and all of that type of thing that had been written about Africa. People here wanted to know about it, and they wanted to talk with somebody who had gone to Africa. I happened to be at the same conference that you saw the picture of Franklin Williams and others in. [Stanford University August, 1960]

Chall: Oh yes, one of the local conferences.

Albrier: In Palo Alto it was held. And Edith Austin said to me at that conference. . . . Mr. Albrier had just been dead about two years and I had planned to take a trip, but to plan it after I had gotten over his passing. She said to me, "Albrier, come go with me to Africa, to Nigeria. I'm going to Nigeria. I'm being sent by the papers; I'm going to represent the black news media at the Nigerian independence."* So I said, "That sounds good. I think I'll do it."

So, in six weeks, I was all ready to go.

Chall: That was a spur of the moment decision--

Albrier: To Nigeria, to this independence. I think I gave you the letter. I wrote to Miss Height and told her that I was going to Africa. I knew they were going to send somebody to represent the National Council of Negro Women over there, to Nigeria.

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*Edith Austin is a reporter for the Sun Reporter.

Oakland Tribune, Sunday, March 19, 1961

From Slave Ship to Jet

For Mrs. W. A. (Frances) Albrier it was a pilgrimage, the triumphant return trip of a journey begun more than 200 years ago by the ancestors of American Negroes.

They had come as captives in crowded, disease ridden slave ships. She was zooming by jet above the very seas where they had endured storm, starvation and cruelties during weeks and months of travel.

Mrs. Albrier, past president of San Francisco Chapter, National Council of Negro Women, is a resident of Berkeley, at 1621 Oregon. She was the only representative from the Eastbay in a party of eight invited to attend the ceremonies of Nigerian Independence in Lagos, capital of the new member of the British Commonwealth.

"Africa is no longer the Dark Continent," said Mrs. Albrier, who has been giving lectures to various clubs, among them the Tuskegee Alums in San Francisco, on her experiences while visiting Nigeria. "The jet plane has made next door neighbors of the African nations and the United States. It is only 15 hours from New York to Nigeria. The earth is fast becoming what Wendell Wilkie called it, 'one world.' "

Noting that the year of African turmoil in shaking off the shackles of colonialism is also that of the centennial of the American Civil War, Mrs. Albrier said, "Many Africans favored Patrice Lumumba because he was closer to the people than to the higher-ups and had made an ardent fight for independence. Trouble is quite likely to continue unless they can quiet the people down in countries surrounding the Congo."

Mrs. Albrier still feels a surge of emotion as she recalls the ceremonies of independence, attended by Princess Alexandre of Kent and Governor General and Lady Robertson.

"It was just at midnight, the lights were dimmed as the Union Jack descended," recalled Mrs. Albrier, "Then the green, white and green Nigerian flag rose into the spotlight. People cheered and cried and kissed each other and said 'glory to God' for in that moment a nation was made for 40 million and won them the right to have a place in the councils of the world."

Mrs. Albrier called attention to the means through which Nigeria won independence after years of preparation "Dr. Nnamde Azikiwe who had cursed Britian for years said, 'we give credit to her for an imperishable legacy of rule of law, respect for human dignity and freedom.' They had been prepared and educated for independence. Officials had been educated in England, taken their places in industry and in Parliament."

In contrast to the turmoil and conflict of the Congo, Mrs. Albrier told of the unity of the 250 tribes of different cultures and languages under Sir A Bu A Kar Balewar, Nigerian prime minister.

"There has been no threat to unity for they solved that problem a long time ago. As early as 1914 Britain started training Nigerians. More than 1,000 students, men and women, are now ready to be graduated from English universities. Eighteen years ago Nigeria was admitted to the Cabinet."

In spite of the fact that 70 per cent of Nigeria's 40 million are Moslems and 30 per cent Christians, Mrs. Albrier reports no schism. "Though they differ in language and culture, they are one in brotherhood. The coat of arms is 'unity and faith.' "

Nigerian girls are given the same educational opportunities as boys, Mrs. Albrier said, "There are women barristers who were educated at the University of London. If a woman wants to have a career she has only to prove her ability to study for it. I met Miss Margaret Ekpo, first woman member of the Nigerian Parliament who some time ago established a sewing institute. Nigerian girls are studying nursing and midwifery at a beautiful modern hospital. Nigerian women are born traders. You find them in stores everywhere. There is a well developed business and professional class. I even saw a complete staff of Nigerian native born people in an American bank in Lagos. That same bank does not hire Negro employees in an Eastbay branch which is patronized exclusively by Negroes."

Laurel School
Oakland Calif
Jan. 4, 1967

Dear Mrs. Allvier,

Thank you for coming to our school, and for showing us some recent scenes of Nigeria.

I've learned some things since you came to visit us. Some are:

- Nigerians make most of their house utensils, clothes, etc.
- and other interesting facts

I've enjoyed your custumes and the manny other articles.

Tina Lee
Grade 4

Albrier: I went with the press, but I didn't get a press card to use. I was to represent the California Voice. At that time, when they gave me the credentials to represent the California Voice, it was too late to get it in the press media over there. Because there were thousands of papers from all over the world there. However, I was a guest of the press; so I had a press badge with Edith Austin. I got to see more than the average tourist.

Chall: Oh, you certainly must have.

Albrier: I was admitted into many other activities that the average tourist was not admitted to, but when we got to New York, there was the Ebony vice-president and his wife, and the social editor of Ebony magazine. There was the Pittsburgh Courier editor.

[end tape 9, side 1; begin tape 9, side 2]

Chall: You met with all the very great persons of the press, then, when you got to New York, and you traveled with them all the time?

Albrier: Yes. The tour leader--the tour travel agency had booked us all together as a group. We traveled over there with them. Our first stop was in Portugal; then we left Portugal, and we stopped in Liberia, just one day. Then we left Liberia and we stopped in Dakar, Senegal, then Ghana, Accra. It was there that I met the daughter of a chief.

We were fortunate to be there at the time of year that the chiefs had their annual festival. The tribes would have the chiefs' festival, where they would honor the chiefs. They would have lots of food and dancing and a good time, honoring the chief. We were just in time to be there.

I met the queen mother and the queen mother had been reared in one of the missionary schools, and spoke English very fluently. She's passed now, but her daughter and I are still good friends and still correspond with each other.

After we left there, we went to Lagos, Nigeria. We were there three weeks. That was during the independence celebration. We were there when we were guests of the queen's cousin. I think it's in my scrapbook.

Chall: Yes, it is.

Albrier: The festivals were beautiful. There were so many of them, so many displays. So many tribes came in. It's regrettable that that last war that they had over there in Nigeria, many of those people were killed.

Chall: Yes, some of these states had started out with such great hopes and they've had such difficulties; independence isn't all that easy.

Albrier: No. They began to fight among themselves, those different tribes. There was one tribe of them that was very well educated. They received all of the big jobs that the British gave them, until that made a jealousy between the other tribes. Besides, part of Nigeria is Christian, and the other part is Moslem.

Chall: That's hard. What went on inside of you while you were in Africa--in Ghana, and then those three weeks in Nigeria? Your emotions and--

Albrier: I was curious all the way about the people and how they lived in the tribes. I was interested in the tribes. I visited one tribe. I told many of the mothers over here about our distance with children--and the children in the tribes are not. The mother doesn't have to worry about the children. Everybody takes care of the children.

I remember one lady I asked, said she had four daughters and only one was there. I asked her where the others were. She said, "Oh, they're down with their uncles and their aunts and I haven't seen them for three, four nights." What happened--they're so close together that their uncles and aunts--if Janie comes in, why Janie sits down at the table and has dinner, and if it's late, she's put to bed--given a bath and put to bed. Her mother is way up at the other end in her house. But she has no worry about her children, because they are with some of their relatives, and every relative feels a responsibility for the children of the tribe.

Chall: It's a big family.

Albrier: And they take care of each other and each other's children. There was that closeness. If there was an older man sitting on the corner, I would give him a present--a pound--talk to him and give him a pound. All of the children would come up and thank me. They greatly appreciated that I was acknowledging and being kind to a grandparent. It was that tribal feeling--that tribal closeness that we have lost over here, that they have over there.

Chall: Do you think that's what held some of the slaves together in the South, on the plantations in the early days?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: It's a little hard to keep it in big cities, isn't it?

Albrier: I should say.

Chall: In urban areas.

Albrier: I was very much interested in their art work and the things that they did. I was interested in the huge dye vats, how they made those beautiful colors out of bark, seeds, and berries and roots. They made these beautiful colors. They can make a blue that can't be duplicated. Then how they weave, raise, and spin the cotton. I used to see my grandmother spin cotton, then make it into thread and make it into socks and things. I could see where that came from. Or they spin the cotton into thread and then they weave it into cloth; then they dye it in these huge vats, different colors.

Chall: I see, so it's dyed afterwards.

Albrier: Yes. Then the main carving places where they do all of this carving. They haven't had any lessons in art, like we have over here. They stick with their knives and just carve that hard wood, carve all kinds of figures.

Chall: It's an exciting kind of sculpture, really. I love it--the African sculpture. And it had a great influence on the European painters. You saw them then when they were doing it, quite a while ago, when it was still pretty authentic kind of work.

Albrier: In Nigeria--England has taken out all of their most beautiful art work, and it's in England. That year, they made it a law that nothing could be taken out of Nigeria anymore, of art.

Chall: Do they have a museum where they put it away?

Albrier: Yes. They have beautiful ivory carvings. It's wonderful how people haven't had any lessons. We have to have years of lessons, and they just sit down and do it.

Chall: Don't they pass this from father to son, so that some of those people have been skilled through generations?

Albrier: Yes. It has. It's been passed from father to son, the same as the weaving and that type of work with the girls.

Traveling as a Child in Europe, 1910-1913

Chall: You had been in Europe before you went abroad to Africa. I think I read this in some--maybe it was a newspaper article. When was this, that you had traveled to Europe?

Albrier: I traveled to Europe ever since I was a little girl.

Chall: Really?

Albrier: With this lady that my grandmother reared. Her name is Mrs. Schwartz. My grandmother reared a girl and two boys that were her master's children. Their mother died. After the Civil War, she was given the house with these children. She was asked to raise them and take care of them. Mrs. Leila Schwartz went East to school. It wasn't her name. Her married name was Schwartz. She married this man who was very wealthy. He died and left her his wealth.

My grandmother used to go up to New York City to see her--she'd send for her every summer. One summer she took me with her. She said to me--I was a little over twelve--"I'd like for you to go with me. I'd like for you to travel with me," because she had had heart trouble. It was nitroglycerine pills--I know what it was now, but I didn't then.

She would get kind of dizzy spells and kind of swoon off, and you'd have to watch her and slip a pill under her tongue and they'd bring her out. She had had some other maids with her that had stolen a lot from her--jewelry--so she felt that I'd watch her more, I guess. So she asked my grandmother if I couldn't travel with her; she was going to Europe.

Chall: My goodness! How old were you?

Albrier: I immediately said, "No indeed. I'm not going to no Europe with you. You're not getting me over there and mistreat me. That's too far away from my grandmother." My grandmother looked at me and said, "She won't mistreat you. I reared her. She will be able to show you things and give you an education, in traveling, because I got an education by traveling with her, that I will never be able to afford to give you. You go. She'll take care of you all right. She'll be all right with you. You will get a wonderful education traveling that you will not receive any other way." So I went with her.

Chall: How old were you on your first trip?

Albrier: I was a little past twelve.

Chall: Where did you go?

Albrier: We went to Europe--to England first, and we went to Paris, France. Everything that I saw in my schoolbooks I wanted to see, and she saw that I saw it. I went to the museum--I read in the geography and in the books about the museum, the Louvre and the Luxembourg and all that beautiful art and pictures. And that was the first thing that I wanted to see when we went to Paris was the Louvre and the Luxembourg. She would go with me and would tell the attendant--she would tip him generously with money--"This is my girl. You take her and show her everything and take care of her." And she would go on about her business. They would take me around and show me everything, and tell me about every picture and every piece of art.

Chall: What an experience!

Albrier: Yes. In England, I went through all of those old castles and heard all of that horrible history. [Laughter]

Chall: You really had an adventure. Did you go again? Were there many years, summers, that you went with her?

Albrier: Three years I traveled with her.

Chall: Different places?

Albrier: To different places.

Chall: So you covered Europe, then. That means Italy as well as France and England--

Albrier: Yes. She had friends all over Europe. She would go and visit them.

Chall: Would she stay in their homes?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: So you stayed in people's homes?

Albrier: I stayed in their homes with her. I stayed in her room. My grandmother was right. I think about all the wealth that I saw. But that made me almost an atheist.

Chall: When you went through the churches, is that it? Or what?

Albrier: No. You take in England--in all these wealthy homes: wealth, silver--eating out of silver--and all of that help, and all of those poor people. I would tell her, "I want to see England. I want to see where the poor people live. I want to see the factories." I remember her telling the butler to take me down to see the factories where they made cloth.

In going through to see these factories, I saw these poor children, with just G-strings and rags. It was worse than New York. I used to rave about New York to my grandmother--about those tenement houses where the poor people lived. My grandmother would lecture to me how fortunate I was, and look at those people, and that I should always serve God and love God, and all of that. That was my grandmother's logic.

I saw all these poor little children, some of them half-naked, going through those factories. I'd see them weaving the cloth; making the cloth. These people working. And then afterwards, they'd come from work and go to these dull, old tenement houses--dirty streets and things.

Chall: The butler actually took you into places like that?

Albrier: Yes. Then he'd take me home. I said to my grandmother, "You know one thing? I don't believe there's any God. There can't be any God." She said, "How come you're talking like that?" I said, "How come some people have so much? Look at Mrs. Schwartz. She has more than you. And you believe in God. And you worship God. She has more than you; she has more than a lot of people. Her friends have more. And look at the poor people have so little; they have so much. How come God let that happen?"

Chall: How did she answer that?

Albrier: She told me it wasn't God; it was people themselves misusing what God put on this earth for all of his children. I said, "I just don't see how there's any God. There must not be any God. I wouldn't let that happen. I'd take all of that money away from some of them and divide it, and let people live happy." Then my grandmother got so that she didn't want me to go to those places, or to see the poor people.

I said, "Do you know some of those people don't have anything to eat, hardly. They live in darkness--dark rooms, dark streets, dark everything." And in those days, those tenements were terrible. They were awful places.

Chall: These were the London tenements you saw.

Albrier: Yes. Poor people. I didn't see so much of it in Paris. They were there, but I didn't see them. But in London, I saw plenty of them. In New York, I saw where a lot of the poor people live, and the poor blacks live, the poor Italians, and the foreigners. It was a revelation. It put you in a quandary to go from one extreme to the other.

Chall: Particularly if you were living in the very height of wealth, as you were when you traveled. Large homes, butlers and servants, silver--

Albrier: People sleeping in satin sheets. Then others didn't have any sheets.

Chall: That's right. Hardly a change of clothing.

Albrier: Little children begging you for some money and some things.

Chall: Had you read any of Charles Dickens' novels before you went abroad? I just wondered if it reminded you of what he'd written.

Albrier: I think I read one, where I think he spoke of that.

Chall: His descriptions in his day of the poverty in the streets are very graphic. It sounds as if you were seeing something of the same.

That was pretty early, wasn't it. That was before World War I?

Albrier: Yes, before that first big war.

Chall: Yes, that's a long time ago. You certainly have had a broad education, one way or another, haven't you? But that certainly was an exposure not to forget.

Albrier: Then I went back to England. [1960] Coming through, we came back through London from Africa. I didn't see those horrible places then. It wasn't as bad. It was bad enough for the poor people, but they lived better than they did in those days.

Chall: So, England has changed quite a bit?

Albrier: Yes. I could see why the people wanted to get away from England and come over to this country.

Chall: Speaking of churches and religion, you didn't become an atheist, obviously.

Albrier: No, my grandmother saw to that. She kept working with me and talking to me until she got that out of my mind--that it was God's doing that there was such a difference. And it was, it was shocking to me. As a youngster, I couldn't see through that.

Here was this very wealthy woman who had all this finery and everything she wanted. Her sheets were satin. I saw satin sheets long before they came on the market. If I told her I wanted to go shopping, she would think nothing of giving me twenty-five dollars and telling me to go get it and keep it--keep the money. My grandmother had to watch me with her, that I didn't lose the value of money and the earning of money. So she stopped her from being so liberal in giving me money like that.

Yet, she was the most unhappy person. She was very unhappy for some reason. She never could get herself together after her husband passed. Here she was with all of this wealth, and she wasn't happy. And I was poor, and I was happy as a lark! [Laughter]

Chall: It's hard to figure.

Albrier: Yes. Then to see the contrast of how some people can live with everything in life, and others have nothing, and have so little in material things and still be happy.

Civil Rights Organizations

National Negro Congress

Chall: I wanted to talk to you about some civil rights organizations here. You've been active in several. You were on the board of directors in 1938 of the National Negro Congress. I don't know how long that lasted. Some people said that it became quite leftist at one time.

Albrier: It didn't last very long. That was started by A. Philip Randolph. It was based on training and employment. That was when so many of the black workers throughout the country were unemployed. He had organized the Pullman porters union and was still active in the unions, and saw so much discrimination in the unions, and so many of the crafts eliminating black people out of the unions--not taking them into the unions at all--so he organized the Congress to get the people together in order to help themselves.

Profile of a Bay Area Leader

She's Been On The Civil Rights Battle Field A Long, Long Time.....Even Before It Was Popular

By Madison Harvey

Synonymous with the growth and development of racial progress in Northern California is the story of Frances Redgray Albrier, a Berkeley woman who has long been in the fight.

Her story is the story of the struggle to get Negroes into the mainstream of the Bay Area economic, political, educational and what-have-you life of the community.

Frances was born in Mt. Vernon, New York, and upon the death of a parent went to live with her grandmother in Tuskegee, Alabama. Thus it was that she was reared in that historic place and was a student of the eminent men of our race, Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver. Among her prized souveniers are papers bearing the signature of Dr. Carver.

In Tuskegee, Frances attended Children's House, a private school, Tuskegee Institute, then Fisk University for one year, after which she switched to Howard, where she graduated in 1920.

Also in 1920 came the first of two marriages, when she was married to William Albert Jackson. Now twice widowed, she is the mother of three children: William Albert, a marine engineer aboard the S.S. Hope, now stationed in Guinea, Africa, and two married daughters, Betty Kimble, who lives with her army major husband in the East, and Anita Turner, a nurse in the Bay Area.

About 1930, Frances came to the west coast and almost immediately her letters of protest about deplorable conditions in the community began to appear in the local press.

During the 1930's, when most of today's civil rights fighters were not even born, Frances was picketing business establishments in an effort to break down hiring policies that were discriminatory. She was one of the first women of the race to be hired by Kaiser shipbuilders in Richmond — as a welder.

She was president of the Ladies' Auxiliary of Dining Car Workers, Local 456, when that organization held the first racial tea at the Oakland Uptown YWCA. She was active in the Linden St. YWCA, and worked with Community Service Councils, a forerunner of the United Servi Organization (USO) a recreational facility for service men.



Frances Albrier

In 1934 she became Mrs. Willie A. Albrier. In 1936, she became active in politics and has continued active till the present. She ran unsuccessfully for Berkeley City Council during the 30's.

In 1938 she was elected to the Alameda County Democratic Central Committee and served for 20 years, 4 of them as secretary. She served as campaign manager for a number of politicians, including Governor Culbert Olson and President Franklin D. Roosevelt. She is a member of a large number of political organizations.

Among the clubs she organized was the Women's Welfare Committee, which was instrumental in getting Negro teachers in the Berkeley School System.

The busy civic worker has been involved, during her life in California, in several projects at the same time. Foremost among her activities currently is the San Francisco Negro Cultural and Historical Society, whose chief purpose is to promulgate the study of Negro history in the Bay Area.

For 20 years she has been a member of the Berkeley NAACP and is now a member of the Executive Board. In addition to her membership in several political clubs, she also holds active membership on local and national women's clubs and has held numerous offices.

Also among her accomplishments was her service to the Red Cross during the war, for which she has several awards. Her travels include a trip to Africa in 1960 to observe the Independence celebrations of Nigeria.

Her home at 1621 Oregon St., Berkeley, is chock full of mementoes, souveniers, scrapbooks and pictures, but the hearty lady spends no time in memories. For her, they represent experiences which she uses to map the campaign for her next adventure.

Among the other activities that claim the attention of the busy Mrs. Albrier is membership in the Friends of the Berkeley Public Library, Save San Francisco Bay Association, International Hospitality Center of the Bay Area, Associated Sportsmen of California, Longfellow School (Berkeley) PTA, National Council of Negro Women, Lily of the West Tabernacle of Daughters of Tabor, Campanile Temple Daughter of Elks, Hattie De Hart Past Daughter Rulers Council, Southgate Chapter O.E.S. Order of Eastern Stars, Women's Art and Industrial Club, and the Berkeley Committee on Aging. She is president of the Northern Federation of Colored Women's Clubs.

Formerly a member of Parks Chapel AME Methodist Church, she is now part of the congregation of Downs Memorial Methodist, Berkeley.

Albrier: I think he drew many of us into the Congress and later the radical element came in like they always do. They come in and gradually work themselves up into offices. And when you know it, they have taken over your organization. When that happened to the Congress, A. Philip Randolph sent a message to all of us to withdraw. And we did.

Those of us in the Bay Area were people like Tarea Pittman, C.L. Dellums, myself--we all were active in it. But when he withdrew, we did also.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Chall: The one organization you had a long term interest in, were an officer in, was the NAACP. I think I came across something that indicated that you'd been active since about 1936. What interested me was that I found in your scrapbook a card that looked just like an election card--slate election card. It dealt with an election to the NAACP board.

You called yourselves [reading] "progressive sincere candidates to be elected to offices of your NAACP. President, George Vaughns; Vice-President, James F. Davis; Secretary, Quetee Meneweather." Those were the officers. Then for directors, "vote for five only." There's Frances Albrier, Manitoba James, Roy Blackburn, James W. Payne, E.A. Daly, and D.G. Gibson. You gave them six names, of whom they could choose five.

Now, what was all that about? This was 1940, Mrs. Albrier.

Excuse me, let me tell you something else here. [Reading] "A change is needed. Vote for these race-minded candidates." [Laughter] Now, you've got to tell me what was going on in the NAACP in 1940.

Albrier: In the forties, a great many of us felt that the NAACP was not taking the interest in the black people and the black citizens like they should have. A great many of us felt that attorneys were taking over the NAACP, and their interest was only in getting cases that they could work on, when there were so many other issues in the community that the NAACP should take on in the interests of the people in the community. NAACP seemed to have fallen from grace all over the country, not just here, that way.

Chall: Even in the forties, as early as that?

Albrier: Yes. We felt that we wanted people who were interested in the poor people, and in the conditions of the people, and in discrimination, and that would take a stand on these issues and hold the line. We knew how NAACP came about, and it wasn't for any certain class of black people; it was for all the black people and especially the poor black people that needed the NAACP.

Chall: Were there many whites in the NAACP at that time, as officers?

Albrier: Yes, a few.

Chall: Do you remember whether you won that election in 1940?

Albrier: Only some of us won in the election.

Chall: Who was George Vaughns?

Albrier: He was an attorney--one of the pioneers in the community.

We found out, too, in organizations like the NAACP, that certain people get into it and get to thinking that it's their organization and they have to run it, and everybody must do what they wish to do, or do what they want to be done.

Chall: I see. So there could be dissension then, from time to time?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Just on a matter of personality as well as policy?

Albrier: Yes. Because at that time, we felt that more consideration should have been given to the people in employment,and other cases came up where we thought the NAACP should have been active and taken hold where discrimination was.

Chall: At that time, it wasn't moving?

Albrier: No.

Chall: In 1940.

Albrier: Then, too, it wasn't a reflection on any of the officers who were in there. It was to shake them up, to let them know that the community would remove them and the community would go into action if the work of the NAACP didn't go on, and if its objectives weren't carried out.

Chall: Was the NAACP one of the organizations of the black community that was really watched by more black people than other organizations, let's say? Were a lot of black people interested in the NAACP?

Albrier: Well, the NAACP has been, and I guess it always will be, the militant organization and the spokesman for the black people. It has been ever since it began, because it's been left a legacy by DuBois, by Walter White, and by all of those pioneers in NAACP. Our last one was Roy Wilkins. The legacy is handed down from one generation to the other.

Chall: Even though--and we'll be talking about them--other organizations have come along. The NAACP seems to stay despite its ups and downs.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: In this community--I don't know all of them--I haven't really made a study of the NAACP--but I've come across various names. I would guess that some of these people would have different ways of dealing with the problems: H.T.S. Johnson, Walter Gordon, Frankie Jones (a woman, of course), C.L. Dellums, and Tarea Pittman. Some of these people are much more militant, I think, than others were, at different times.

H.T.S. Johnson was supposed to be quite militant.

Albrier: Yes, he was. He was a minister, pastor of Taylor Memorial Methodist Church--pastor there for many years. He was very militant and outspoken.

Chall: And Walter Gordon was not, as I understand it.

Albrier: Walter Gordon, in his day, he came in the early years. There weren't so many black people in the Bay Area when he was in. He was militant, but he took his time on things. He wasn't as outspoken as a great many people thought he should be.

Chall: As Johnson had been?

Albrier: As Reverend Johnson--

Chall: --had been.

Albrier: No.

Chall: What difference did it make in terms of how far and where the Negro went with respect to whether you were responding like a Reverend Johnson to the problems, or like a Walter Gordon to the problems? Did it make any difference in what happened in the black community?

Albrier: The response?

Chall: Reverend Johnson had a different way of responding to problems or tackling problems than Walter Gordon. Did it make any difference in what happened in the black community, whether you were more militant or more gradual?

Albrier: The black people in the forties--in the early forties--weren't as militant as they became later. You look at the background of those two men, Reverend Johnson and Walter Gordon--Walter Gordon came up around here in Berkeley and in California. He had not seen the ravages, and the pain, and the sorrow of discrimination among his people, as a whole. He hadn't seen the masses of black people like Reverend Johnson had in Houston, Texas, and pastoring a large church, and pastoring in cities where they were.

So, Reverend Johnson naturally was more impatient and militant, and spoke out more loudly than Walter Gordon. Walter Gordon would do his through the law and courts. He believed in taking care of things through the law. We'll take it to court. He was more mild about it, but he'd keep digging at it.

Chall: In terms of the community, which type of leadership did the black community need? Did it need a leader like Johnson or a moderate leader?

Albrier: From the forties on up, it began to need a leader like Reverend Johnson. Because, you see, we had the younger group who were demanding action. They began to demand action. "Why should we wait? We shouldn't wait. We should go into action and get our rights, first class citizenship, now."

While Walter Gordon said we should plan it; we should take a certain length of time and plan it this way and plan it that way before we go into action. And the younger groups were saying, action now.

Chall: How did, then, leaders like C.L. Dellums, and Frankie Jones, and Tarea Pittman handle this action now problem?

Albrier: They agreed with the black citizens; and there were whites, too, who felt that we needed strong community organizations led by organizations like the NAACP to take a stand and fight against discrimination, segregation, injustice against not only the black citizen, but all citizens.

[end tape 9, side 2; begin tape 10, side 1]

Chall: You were telling me about C.L. Dellums and his type of leadership on the NAACP.

Albrier: C.L. Dellums came in and took over the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. He, for a long time, had been an activist in labor. He knew the problems because he had studied them and had noticed them in all of their forms, in labor. He had met many people, many of the porters. He had been in the struggle of winning the rights of the sleeping car porters under A. Philip Randolph, who was one of the greatest teachers and leaders in the United States, in the struggle for freedom.

He was all geared up for action--for getting things done and not letting things drop, and to take a leading part in these problems as they presented themselves, in labor and the government.

So was Tarea Pittman. But Walter Gordon was different. He'd been under different circumstances and had been under a different environment. If Walter Gordon had been in Dellums' shoes, he would have been the same as Dellums; maybe, he would have been more volatile.

Chall: How about Frankie Jones?

Albrier: Frankie Jones, the same way. She had been in the southern states and had known the problems there; and she had known the problems here from the time that she lived here. She was not so active in having things done immediately as the others. She was the type that would like to take her time and find her way; to study them out, and then go into action. She was more of a teacher type. She believed in that type of method in solving the problem, more like a social worker.

Chall: How did that work?

Albrier: How did it work? In some cases, it didn't work. Some cases would take longer. But she came up in the forties, when there was a change. She was definitely ready to lead the NAACP towards that change.

Chall: Every leader has his time.

Albrier: She came in at the time we were fighting for integrated schools.

Chall: I guess that did take some time and teaching, working with other people, before you achieved it.

Albrier: Yes. It was a time when, with these problems, you had to be a very skilled person to handle any organization that was wanting a change and wanting to change things. Because when you want to change too fast, you can destroy it. You have to build a foundation. Frankie was a person who believed in building a firm foundation, quietly building that foundation to stand on before you go out and build the rest of the house. So she made friends and educated people to the idea of freedom for everybody--for every citizen.

Chall: I can see you must have had some very exciting meetings from time to time, [laughs] with all these different philosophies.

Albrier: Yes. Yes.

The Communist Party and the Black Community

Chall: Jessica Mitford--I guess you know who Jessica Mitford is--has just written a book called A Fine Old Conflict which deals primarily with the work of the Communist party in the Bay Area.* She has written about the Communist party's concern, first of all, with police brutality about 1949, and bringing forward into the community the problems about police brutality, which she claims the NAACP simply wouldn't get involved in. "The NAACP," she says [reading] "stood on the sidelines throughout our year-long campaign, sent a representative who testified in generalities and called for cooperation between the police and responsible groups in the community. The committee eventually issued a wishy-washy report, finding 'some degree of truth' in the charges. Powers [Robert] was fired on the initiative of the Republican committee members for having cooperated with the CRC [Civil Rights Congress], a subversive organization."

Then she claims that the NAACP did very little with respect to community reaction to the purchase by black veteran, Wilbur D. Gary, of a home in an all-white housing project in Rollingwood in 1952.

Albrier: Where?

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*Jessica Mitford, A Fine Old Conflict, (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1977) p. 110-112

Chall: Rollingwood.

Albrier: Where's that?

Chall: I don't know where that is. I wasn't sure myself. I suspect it was somewhere in the eastern hills of Richmond. I'd have to check that out.**

The NAACP, she says, was not generally noted for such militant activities as leaflet distribution, but they gave out leaflets at the mass meeting called by the East Bay Civil Rights Congress about Gary that read, "Keep your eyes wide open. Don't get sucked in. These groups, organizations, and publications, are attempting to mislead the Negro community. Check and double check before you sign petitions, attend meetings, serve on defense committees, or join or contribute to questionable organizations." She says further that the charges in the leaflet were, of course, familiar--that the party--that's the Communist party--and its front organizations used issues like Rollingwood, police brutality, the Newson case, to extend their influence among blacks, that it exploited these issues for its own ideological purposes.

Albrier: The NAACP said that?

Chall: That's what she claimed.

Albrier: They did. That was true.

Chall: That's what she says [continues reading] "Were these charges true? My answer would be yes, but so what? The crux of our method was to use these issues to identify the economic and political roots of racial bigotry. We endeavored to show that the cases of police brutality we had uncovered were not random, isolated instances of a few sadistic cops brutalizing helpless victims, rather, police terrorism in the black community was a deliberate, conscious policy of Oakland's political rulers to keep the blacks in a state of subjugation."*

So, she felt, I guess, that you might just as well have used the Communist party to gain your own ends as they did to gain theirs. I assume you reacted at that time. I'd just like to know how you did react to that.

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*A Fine Old Conflict, p. 132-133

**Rollingwood is a housing development, built during the 1950s in an area near Richmond, California.

Albrier: Yes. In those days--it was when the radicals, the Communist party was moving into our neighborhoods and re-educating our young people on Communist lines; tearing up homes in the community by black men with white women. They would send their women in with the black men--something that had never happened--and homes were being torn up. Black women were complaining.

We had a picketing, "Don't buy where you can't work" at King's store. I was in that picket. We kept the Communists out of our meetings.

Chall: Yes, you told me about that.

Albrier: Because we didn't want that type of attitude in the community against the police. Many of us had lived in the South and we had seen what the police could do to you, but we were not going to be used. Or let that be used to destroy the very thing that we were fighting for. Because we weren't fighting for any Communist party; we were fighting for an issue that we were against. We were against police brutality when it came to black people.

So with us, we went to the police and we informed the police that we were going to picket and what we were picketing for. And the police cooperated with us and told us how to cooperate with them. It was not to let crowds get across the sidewalks and jam up the sidewalks and to have big crowds. To keep it clear--to keep our picket clear. If we did that, they wouldn't be involved. Because they were not involved in our issue with Mr. King. But if we cluttered up the sidewalk, they would have to step in. It was against the law to have the sidewalks and streets cluttered up.

So we got along all right with the police. Down in west Oakland, where the Communists were, they did that, and picked fights with the police, and they had people arrested, and the vans down there. All of that made a lot of notoriety. We felt, after our study, that they did not care.

Some of our people belonged to that party. They went to their meetings. Then we decided that they did not care for the black people; only in getting across <u>their</u> ideas and building the Communist party. And we had <u>nothing</u> to do for the Communist party--the black people. Because we had <u>fought</u> in this country, <u>died</u> in this country, <u>worked</u> in this country, and had <u>built</u> this country; and this country was ours and we were going to <u>demand</u> it that way. We didn't need any radical, Communist party with their ideas coming over, involving us, because we couldn't see us getting any place with them.

Chall: So when it came to their having an issue like police brutality in Oakland, which they could prove, you still were not willing to work with them in any way.

Albrier: Police brutality in Oakland was not only police brutality against blacks; they were against whites. They beat up whites, too. Because I took issue with them down there--all of the Democratic women took issue with them when they beat up a man who was a diabetic, and he was a Mormon--in jail. The Mormons got onto it, and they got all of the organizations--the black organizations and everything against the brutal police in Oakland. Then they got Mrs. [Irene] Erdman. Mrs. Erdman is the one that I was trying to remember yesterday--the one who was interested in these newsboys. Irene Erdman.

They got all of the women, then, against police brutality as an issue. And they weren't Communists. It wasn't the Communist party, it was the people themselves. This man happened to be a Mormon and the Mormon church got behind it and involved everybody--all of us, the Democrats and the citizens, in it.

The same way with the black people. The black people were against brutality. They had been the brunt of police brutality, but they were fighting police brutality as it was, against black people; not as an issue of a party or a group.

Chall: She explains the history of it the way you see it, except that she thinks you should have gotten in there and worked with them.

Albrier: No. Because they didn't have the confidence to work with them.

The Congress of Racial Equality

Chall: In 1942 and '43, when CORE came out of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, I think you joined the Fellowship of Reconciliation, didn't you?

Albrier: Yes, I joined CORE.

Chall: You joined CORE. In the earliest days, it was a nonviolent organization, committed to civil rights for blacks.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Did you join a local CORE organization?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Was it primarily blacks or was that a combination of blacks and whites?

Albrier: A combination of black and white.

Chall: Some of the white liberals that you had met before?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: And worked with?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: What did you think,generally, of the methods of nonviolent, direct action of CORE? Did you think that would be a good method to work out the problems?

Albrier: I think CORE was the forerunner of Dr. Martin Luther King on nonviolence--that you can do more and you can generate and build an idea better with nonviolence than you can with violence. You can build that spirit up--of treating people with love and consideration and what is right, better with nonviolence than you can with violent means. Violent means have never done anything for anybody but create a lot of bitterness. We had a lot of bitterness to deal with--a lot of bitterness in the black race to deal with because they had been so badly mistreated. So, we don't need to get any other type of organization that promotes bitterness to help us.

Chall: So you believed this was a good approach.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: CORE really started the sit-ins and the boycotts in the South. As you say, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference took over. How did you feel about those boycotts and sit-ins? They were nonviolent, at least the blacks were nonviolent in those days. The violence was on the part of the whites. What did you feel as those particular activities were going on in the South? Did you think it was about time somebody sat-in in the bus? Was it Rosa Parks, who didn't move?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: That was a brave act.

Albrier: I think it was about time to--it was the psychological time to go into action when they put on the bus strikes and drew the people into that strike of nonviolence, and winning it.

Chall: Did you become a member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference?

Albrier: Yes.

Martin Luther King

Chall: Did you get to know, ever, Martin Luther King?

Albrier: Yes. I was with him and talked to him a good deal at the national convention at Los Angeles. He was there and we sat on the same seat, observing that convention.

Chall: In 1960? [Democratic National Convention]

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Kennedy was the nominee?

Albrier: Kennedy was nominated.

Chall: I notice that you were a speaker--the only woman who spoke at two of the memorial services [for King] in the Bay Area.

Albrier: Yes. The memorial services were gotten up by Dr. A.S. Jackson and he asked me to speak at the memorial for King.

Chall: What did his life and what did his death mean to the black community?

Albrier: King's death to the black community was what you might call a trauma, the same as Abraham Lincoln's death was when he was shot. It was just a sorrowful, upsetting affair to the black community. I don't know how to explain it.

Chall: What do you think that his life meant to the black community?

Albrier: His life was an inspiration and an ideal. His life was the same to the black community as Jesus Christ's life was to Christianity. That's the way they felt about Martin Luther King. A great many of the black people are Christians and they follow the teachings of Christ, and so did King. He was a disciple. To them, he was their spiritual leader as well as their leader.

Chall: Has anybody come into the black community with that kind of leadership since Martin Luther King?

Albrier: No. Not yet. I don't think.

Chall: Nobody was quite like him prior, either, although you had some strong leaders like A. Philip Randolph and DuBois--

Albrier: Yes, but not quite in his field and in his line. By his being a minister, he could reach so many of the people. Because there are thousands of black people in the churches, and he reached all of the sects in the churches--Baptists, Methodists, all of them. What he was fighting for was what they needed.

Militant Groups of the Sixties

Chall: After his death, and really before it, the youth became quite militant. As you said about a prior period, this was a time when they wanted what they wanted now. SNCC--I don't remember now what that stands for--but that group [Student Non Violent Coordinating Committee].

Albrier: Yes, I remember that SNCC group.

Chall: Then even CORE became quite violent in its process. The Black Panthers came along. The Black Muslims came along.

Albrier: Youth looked at their parents and the older ones, and they developed an impatience. They felt that they had taken too long and they had been too patient, and why wait? They felt the time is right now to strike. They should fight for their change right now. That's the attitude of an impatient youth. They get so far, and then it stops. But the thing about it is that the grassroots of the thing is what is right, and to take a stand on the right, and fight for that; not to lay down and be too passive. To be militant, but not overmilitant.

Chall: It's a hard line to draw, isn't it?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: This is youth, as you pointed out--this is the way that youth is. But they were very militant in ways that seemed frightening, I guess, to some. I don't know whether the black community felt frightened by the militancy of SNCC, or the Black Panthers, or the philosophy of Malcolm X and the Black Muslims. What was the reaction, or at least your reaction, to the militancy of these groups? You can't speak for the whole black community, I'm sure. Bobby Seale, and Eldridge Cleaver, and Malcolm X.

Albrier: I felt that they were too far advanced and they were too militant, which has been proven, because they reverted back to where we older ones are. They found out that radical militancy, where you devour and destroy things and give vent to your emotions--that's the one thing you've got to learn to control.

As I tell the youth, you have to learn how to control your emotions or your emotions will destroy you. That's the teaching that all of the masters gave us, all of the great teachers of Christianity gave us. But the youth become so impatient and get so emotional that they want to strike now, and they want to have the change now. It takes years to make changes. It took years to bring our civilization up to where it is now.

Forty Years of Change in the South

Chall: When you went back to Alabama--You gave me something to read a little while ago, and in it I noticed that you had taken a trip to Alabama in 1969 and found conditions considerably changed from what they'd been on one of your previous trips, as well as when you were growing up in the South. Could you tell me what have been the changes that you've seen in your lifetime?

Albrier: I've seen forty years of change. I've seen changes that I never thought that I would see, or that it would happen that way.

Chall: What kind?

Albrier: I was in the Pullman service, and I went back to Alabama on the train. When I first went in the Pullman service in 1926, there was the type of discrimination that we all revolted against. When we got to Houston, Texas, all of the blacks had to get in the chair cars. They could not ride in the cars with the whites.

There was a curtain. They could not eat in the dining room with other people. They had to eat behind a curtain. That was all the way through the South.

When I went back on this train, I saw no curtains. I saw black and white in the Pullman cars. There was no change. The blacks didn't have to get off into another chair car out of the Pullman cars, when they reached the southern lines. To me, that was a big thing and a remarkable change, in so short a time. To me, it had been a short time.

Albrier: When I went into stores, it was the same way. I went into stores and sat down at the counter and had a cup of cofee, right beside a white lady. Nobody said, "You move." I didn't see any sign "For Black Only" in the restrooms. I didn't see any signs "For Black Only." It was just a different city and a different change. I said, "My, what a change in a short length of time. That things could happen so fast to change thinking." Of course, that was done a lot by the government. It was done by people like A. Philip Randolph, C.L. Dellums, all those people; and the work of Walter Gordon.

Chall: Everyone in his own way.

Albrier: That's right. Those changes were made and done. That's what was so amazing.

Chall: Yes. Just to see it all--the contrast.

Albrier: Yes. In the stations, there were black and white sitting in the stations together. When I was in the Pullman service, it was for black over here; for white over here. It just was amazing how those changes could happen.

The Negro Press

Chall: What about the newspapers like the Sun Reporter, The Post, and the California Voice in the Bay Area? Were they an important influence in the Negro community? Were they read?

Albrier: They're read by the community. The Negro community has never given up their papers. They have the background even from Frederick Douglass' days, when he started the paper in order to reach them. So, it's according to what's in the papers and what they demand to be in the papers. If they demand to still have a lot of social life. . . .

But I think the Sun Reporter under Dr. Goodlett, is not leaning that way. He's leaning towards the militancy, of respecting the militancy policy, of education for the masses of Negro people. To weld them together so they will have strength to overcome their difficulties with their friends. Through those papers--he's the publisher of all of them now. The California Voice also. That's the oldest newspaper in northern California.

Chall: And The Post? Tom Berkley's paper.

Albrier: The Post has its influence, too.

Chall: What would it be?

Albrier: I think The Post is not as militant as the Sun Reporter in giving news.

Chall: These papers, I notice, have co-sponsored quite a number of major conferences--black leadership, women's leadership, various kinds through the years. I've been looking at your scrapbooks. They've had some influence that way. At least, they've helped the community in that way with the sponsorship of these conferences.

Albrier: Yes, they have kept the community informed of the conferences and the different organizations. That's in the ideas and promotions of ideas that's going on civically and racially. Without them, I don't know what the black community would do.

Chall: Do many of the members of the black community read the national press like the Pittsburgh Courier or the Chicago Defender? Is that seen around much?

Albrier: Yes, a great many of them do. The Chicago Defender and the Pittsburgh Courier are two of the oldest papers that we have. A great many of the people from the East always take that paper, or get it, so they know the news that's going on in those states. Because we have a large population now of Negroes from New York, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, coming West.

Chall: Do those papers take up more of the national and international news than our local papers do?

Albrier: I think they do.

Chall: Broader coverage.

Albrier: Yes.

VII THE PRESENT: EVALUATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Some Women and Men Who Have Left Their Mark on the Black Community

Chall: I wanted to get an idea from you whom over the years you've known or known of, that you would classify as your heroines and your heroes. The people, who, if you were going to give a talk today on black history, you would include.

What about the Negro women who have done most for the race, those you think would be looked up to today. I remember you told me once Mary Church Terrell was a sort of model of yours when you started out as a young woman. And I know you give lectures on the life of Mary McLeod Bethune. You've known her, too, haven't you?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: She would be one of your heroines?

Albrier: Yes, Bethune and Mary Church Terrell, and Dr. Arenia C. Mallory.

Chall: How about Dorothy Height? Does she fit in there anywhere?

Albrier: Well, she could, but I wasn't as close to her. Do you have to have three?

Chall: Oh, I'd like as many as you can think of--as many women as you can think of who have made a mark in the black community.

Albrier: You mean the community around here?

Chall: Both. It could be national or it could be local. We talked about Charlotta Bass, for example. Not many people know her, but she's been important, hasn't she?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: And people like Mary Terrell and Mary Bethune, of course, are mainly nationally known and important.

Albrier: I'm thinking of those who were in the National Association. I wish I had some thoughts on that.

Chall: That's all right. When you edit, you can put them in. What about people like Rosa Parks? And Fannie Lou Hamer?

Albrier: I didn't know Rosa Parks, but Fannie Lou Hamer, I'd met quite a few times. I admired her. Rosa Parks did not, but Fannie Lou Hamer went through more suffering, torture, and trials to get things done for the black women and the race--for the thousands of people in Mississippi, in the South; also in the United States. All women--when you help elevate, you help elevate white women as well, and vice versa.

Chall: What about modern--the women that we know of today, like Shirley Chisholm and Barbara Jordan?

Albrier: Shirley Chisholm pioneered in politics in running for office, being congresswoman. She worked very hard, and sacrificed to elevate women in the field of politics; that was one way to freedom for women in the home communities, the country, and the world outside of the United States. She is a perfect model.

[end tape 10, side 1; begin tape 10, side 2]

Chall: You mean, when she ran for president--that's when she pioneered?

Albrier: Mrs. Chisholm pioneered when she ran for Congress in New York as a black woman. Anything that black women do like that, they're pioneering; they're the first, or one of the first. Because it takes a lot of guts and militancy and sacrifice to do those things when it isn't popular, and it wasn't popular for a black woman in the East or anywhere.

The same with Mrs. Brathwaite in California--to run for Congress and to be elected. That means that they have paved the way for other women in government. Now, when Mrs. Chisholm ran for president, she did it again. She's pioneered the way for--eventually, we'll have a woman president of the United States. Those doors have been opened. People had looked at her and they've talked about a woman running for president. They heard what she had to say. It will be much easier for the next woman who has the ambition to run for president to do so.

Chall: What about Barbara Jordan?

Albrier: Barbara Jordan has pioneered for women in her state, the state of Texas, in running for Congress and for taking the stand on issues that she has. She has been the voice, again, for all women regardless of race.

Chall: These women are a pride to the black community, I take it.

Albrier: Yes. Also our congresswoman, Mrs. Brathwaite, has done the same thing. And she pioneered through the state and then through the government. I understand she's going to run for attorney general.

Chall: That's right.

Albrier: So she's pioneered opening those doors for women in those different offices. I also admire Mrs. Fong.

Chall: Yes, March Fong [Eu].

What kind of women were Mary Church Terrell and Mary McLeod Bethune that make them stand out so far above any others that you can recall? What special qualities of leadership did they have?

Albrier: Mary Church Terrell was a woman that married well. Her husband was a judge and she had a great deal of the good things of life. But she was a woman who did not forget those who did not have education, employment, homes, and communities in her race. She was able to travel and go to Europe and probably not be discriminated against as her sisters were. She had that love and affection for the sisters of her race to open many doors, and felt responsible for them.

Mrs. Terrell did not have to go to the top of the balcony to see a movie or a play, to see a picture, and be discriminated against. So she picketed. She picketed against this type of discrimination in Washington, D.C., the nation's capital. And she was very much against the lynchings and the forms of discrimination that were heaped on her sisters in the black race, here in these United States. That's why she did so much to organize them in the Association of Colored Women's Clubs and to teach the many who needed education. To provide schools in the southern states for those who needed the schools.

She was a woman who did not have to do those things. She could have gotten along very well and been happy within her own rights and within her own family. Not like Mary McLeod Bethune, who came up from the cotton fields and who worked her way through life step by step. And she opened the doors step by step.

The first great door that was closed, and closed quite tight, was that of education. She could see that her people needed education. They needed to know how to read and write and how to take

Albrier: care of their own business; how to be good cooks, housekeepers, teachers. And they needed all of this training through education, as hundreds had not had the opportunity to go to school.

They needed schools and they needed to know the things in life that were worthwhile. They needed to know how to have faith in themselves because a great many of them had no faith in themselves, because they had been taught that you are just a Negro; you're just a black; you came from nowhere, and you're nobody. But Mary McLeod Bethune taught them that they were God's children and they were somebody and that they could be somebody if they put their hand to the plough, like she did.

She opened up these doors through education in the schools in the deep South. She did not go to the North where things were a little better in education and schools. She went back to the South where the plantations were, with hundreds of black youth who were denied education. She opened up these doors and instilled faith in the young people, so that they could advance to a better life.

I don't think we have another woman that has matched Mary McLeod Bethune and left a legacy to the people as she has.

Chall: These women were selfless, weren't they? They weren't moving into positions where--not only were they opening doors, but they were opening doors for themselves. And I don't mean anything against Shirley Chisholm or Yvonne Brathwaite, because they are opening doors for others by doing it themselves. But they are helping themselves while they do it. Whereas Mary McLeod Bethune and Mary Church Terrell went out in a selfless way for their sisters. And that makes them different.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Were they inspiring speakers as well as hard workers, these two women--Terrell and Bethune?

Albrier: Yes, they were. Mrs. Bethune was a greater speaker than Mary Church Terrell, but Mary Church Terrell was more of a writer.

Chall: I see.

Albrier: There's one other woman that I think stands out in the little time she had here--Fannie Lou Hamer. I don't know of any woman who could have taken the punishment that Fannie Lou Hamer did and still have no regrets, and still could forgive.

Chall: Because she was in prison, wasn't she?

Albrier: I remember she told me that when she was in prison, that they ordered her beaten and they made one of the inmates that she knew quite well, beat her. She had nothing against him at all, because they made him do it. He had to do it. "Mrs. Albrier," she said, "I have nothing against him." I said, "Well, couldn't he have gotten around someway or done something to say that he wouldn't do it?" And she said he had to do it. "I have no animosity against him because they made him do it." To think she had taken those terrible beatings and punishment and still kept going; still kept talking to get decent housing and nursery schools and education for the backwoods people in the Mississippi Delta.

I think she was next to Christ when they crucified him and put those nails through his hands and beat him. I feature Hamer having that spirit, that wonderful indomitable spirit which surely came from God.

Chall: We shouldn't forget these people.

Albrier: No.

Chall: On the male side, whom do you think we should remember? I'm probably thinking in terms of those who came up at about the time that you did--that you've either known or know of. Do you think Marcus Garvey stands out as a pioneer who tried to do something for the black race?

Albrier: Marcus Garvey was one of our pioneers that taught the masses of people, black people, a lesson. Yet they didn't realize it until years later. Because in order to dehumanize the black people, they were taught that they were ugly; their skin was black and ugly; their hair was kinky and ugly; and that they were just ugly. Marcus Garvey came along with a different idea and he taught them that he was a handsome black man. You wouldn't expect him to be white, have a Roman nose, and thin lips, and a white skin.

He had a skin that fitted an African, and that he was from Africa and he was an African. That he was a handsome person. And to have faith in yourself, and to admire yourself and the race would have to admire themselves. And the reason--it was an economic reason why they were taught that they were ugly, ignorant, and heathens. It was from an economic aspect: in order to keep them down and keep them thinking so. The minute they get up and think that they're somebody and they're handsome, then they're on the step to more freedom.

He was the father of that type of education.

Chall: Who followed? Do you place DuBois and A. Philip Randolph as men who came along, important to their race, following Garvey?

Albrier: Yes, they followed Garvey. Garvey took the history of the black race and the people, economically. He followed their condition economically and how they could help themselves economically. The countries that were black could trade with each other. That's why he proposed to have a White Star Line--ships where farmers in Jamaica could trade with the people here what they didn't raise and become a commercial asset among themselves.

All those different ideas of promotion that he instilled--those seeds didn't die. He planted them. He's appreciated today, although it took a long time for him to be appreciated by his people. Today, he's been appreciated.

Not like DuBois. They were two different men with two different ideas. They came upon the scene at different times. DuBois wanted to see his people, as many as possible, get a higher education. He felt that that's what they needed. Then later, he became more militant. He could see that they must take a stand of militancy and demand their rights, like all other people. But he followed in Marcus Garvey's footsteps.

Then there's Roy Wilkins, who came up in this country and who worked with the press and the news media. He became so imbued that the basic knowledge of the black people should be instilled in them that they would lift up their heads and progress, and that they could go forward and take care of themselves in an adequate way of respect.

Chall: He led the NAACP for years.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: What about people like Ralph Bunche and Paul Robeson? Even people like Joe Louis? They're different, but I'm just wondering--

Albrier: They're different. Paul Robeson was one of the pioneers in the field of militance for his people, in the field of struggle and sacrifice. He sacrificed so much for the young people, and in the days when he came up through college, when discrimination was as thick as butter. Yet, he did not become bitter. He struggled and went to the top. He had the strength to do so. He left them a legacy that they should not forget. Every black student will admire and be thankful for Paul Robeson.

Chall: Was there an animosity towards him at one time in the black community, because of his having become a Communist? Or did they feel that that was his opinion?

Albrier: I think the black community never felt that Paul Robeson was a Communist. They felt that the Communists were using him, but he, himself, was not a Communist. He was a person fighting on issues and for the best for his people; and fighting against a program that had been used to keep him down and keep him out of the mainstream of life, and also his people. He sacrificed that this shouldn't be done.

Mrs. Albrier Evaluates Her Goals as a Community Leader

Chall: When Ruth Acty and Velma Ford were working on your fund drive, they did it because they felt they owed a great deal to you. Ruth Acty because she was the first Negro teacher in Berkeley, and Velma Ford because, apparently, most of her life, you have insisted that she do something in her community for her own people, and she has certainly done that. And she feels that she and many other women and men owe you a debt of gratitude because you've made them community-minded and community leaders.

I just wondered what you perceived as your role and your goal. What was your technique for keeping going all those years and for inspiring all these people who feel you were so important to their lives?

Albrier: I think that with people--certain things they are born with. They're instilled at birth, in the embryo stage, from your parents. I think that my grandmother was so imbued with raising the standards of her race, elevating her race, inspiring the young people. She came along with Booker T. Washington and that was his inspiration: to inspire the young people and bring them up from where they were to a better life and the nobler things of life.

When you do for others, that's some of the noble things of life--when you can inspire. One of the greatest things is to inspire young people to the higher things of life, especially when it came to the black race that had so far to go and a long ladder to climb--that you be able to do something to help them and make it better for them. I think that's the inspiration and that's the goal of all of the leaders in the world.

Chall: And that was your goal, passed down to you from your grandmother?

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: And that was the goal that kept you working as hard as you did in all these various organizations?

Frances Albrier Is A Spunky Septuagenarian

Thurs., July 22, 1971,
The POST Page 19

by Pat Tritsch
Post staff writer

Mrs. Frances Albrier of Berkeley, is everyone's grandmother, but nobody's "aunt Frances." At 72, Mrs. Albrier has been there and done it - at least once. She is a world traveler and saw Europe before and after World War I. Her energy and activities would exhaust any other three people. "It's my interest in projects that gives me vitality," she claims. "Everytime I think I should start to take it easy something comes along that stirs me up again and off I go."

The number or organizations to which Mrs. Albrier is, or has been, a member of is endless. She is not the first black woman to gain admission to several groups. She is the first woman.

The Assembly Rules Committee of the California Legislature recently awarded Mrs. Albrier a resolution commending her accomplishments. The resolution notes that she was born in New York, graduated from Booker T. Washington Institute and Howard University, has lived in Berkeley since 1922, and has held offices in numerous organizations including PTA, NAACP, National Council of Negro Women and the Northern California Federation of Colored Women's Clubs.

She has been active in politics, serving on the Democratic Central Committee and was president of the Alameda County Democratic Women's Study Group. And that's just about half of her activities.

How does one person manage to do so much? For one thing, it helps to come from an environment that fosters a feeling of serving the community. Another thing, an understanding and cooperative family is essential.

"I was born in New York, but my mother died when I was three and grandmother reared me in Tuskegee, Ala. She had been a slave and was 18 when she was freed. She was a deeply religious woman and had strong feeling of helping in the community. She visited sick folks in the hospital, but she did much more than that. She was one of the residents of Tuskegee who influenced Booker T. Washington to start his school there.

"I remember when I was a child, tuition at Tuskegee was $10. The poor boys would come to school with the pennies and nickels they'd saved from picking cotton and doing odd jobs. They wanted an education. So Booker T. Washington put them to work. They studied three hours a night after they put in a day growing the food and crops necessary to feed the students and maintain the school. It took two years to get a semester's work.

"In those days it was a trade school. Everyone wore a uniform. The students who were going to be tailors and dressmakers made the uniforms. Some of the students wanted more advanced academic courses, but Mr. Washington said no. He said, 'You can learn a trade here. Then when you're a plumber or a chef you can work your way through another school to become a doctor or a lawyer'.

"I studied botony with George Washington Carver," remembers Mrs. Albrier. "If he called on you and you stood up to answer and started off with 'I think...' he'd motion you to sit down. 'No,' he'd say, 'you don't think. In this class you know, That was his scientific mind working."

She was graduated from Tuskegee with a BA in education, went on to Howard in Washington, D.C. to get her master's in nursing and social work before coming west to Berkeley, in 1922. She cared for her sick step mother here, then married and started her family.

"I gradually became involved in community work, especially PTA, and progressed in PTA as the children progressed through school."

Recently Mrs. Albrier was awarded a life time membership in the PTA. The membership carries a scholarship in her name.

"My husband worked for the railroad. Fortunately, he didn't complain if his dinner was kept warm in the oven and I was away at a meeting. Not all men are so understanding and cooperative. Without his going along with me, I couldn't have done so much.

"The children went right along too. They campaigned for candidates, passed out literature for Roosevelt and were pretty smart politically.

"I taught all of them, the boy and the girls, to cook, clean, wash and iron. I told them they might be in a situation some day when it would be handy to know how to take care of themselves.

"I used to tell them: I know what you're thinking. You think I'm the meanest mother in the world. How do I know? Because I was a child. I remember. I used to think my grandmother was the meanest woman in the world. She'd make me clean my room and do chores. And she'd tell me someday I'd appreciate her. Well, she was right. And someday you children will appreciate me, too. So you go on and do those dishes and think I'm the meanest mother in the world now.

"I don't agree with not disciplining children," adds Mrs. Albrier. "Look at the stars, the seasons. That's divine discipline. Everthing needs discipline. Without it we can't stand up to life. We need it as children so we can become something as adults.

"I think I like the Thirties best," she admits, "People had a closeness. We were less materialistic, more natural and sincere. Of course, I guess we were more ignorant, too."

It was during the depression years that she worked for the welfare program and became active in politics. In 1939, she was the first woman on the Democratic Central Committee. In 1940, she was the first black to join the League of Women Voters. She also was the first woman to run for the Berkeley City Council, paving the way for other women who subsequently have served on the council.

As Mrs. Albrier advanced within the PTA through the years, she also became more involved with politics. She was a member of the Alameda County Democratic Committee for 18 years, was a member of the state committee and also served as president of the Auxiliary to Local #456, Dining Car Cooks, Waiters, Bartenders and Miscellaneous Help.

In 1960 she realized the dream of lifetime. "I always wanted to put my foot on the soil of my ancestors and I did that when I attended Nigeria's independence in 1960. In my earlies travels I had seen almost every country but Russia and India, but I had never had the opportunity to seen my ancestral homeland."

Today, with six grandchildren, and six great grandchildren, Mrs. Albrier is a resource person in black history for both Oakland and Berkeley schools. "Africa underwent a dramatic change in World War One," she explains. "Africans left their homes to fight in Europe and the learned to kill white men, to realize they were not some kind of gods. They also saw more of the world, Eurppean culture. At the same time, American Negroes were migrating from the south to work in the shipyards and war industries, a migration that was stepped up in World War Two."



Mrs. Frances Albrier proudly exhibits a resolution presented to her by the California State Assembly in recognition for her outstanding contributions in behalf of her adopted state.

She also is involved with the senior center. She is the community representative of the Social Planning Dept. for the city of Berkeley and spends her days at the center. In conjenction with this interest she was elected as the senior representatives for Model Cities.

After seven decades of observing and participating in the changes in this country, what does Mrs. Albrier consider important? Education!

"We need more scholarships," she declares. "We are living in an age today where youngsters do get peoples' ears. They will be heard is they speak up.

"We need more vocational and training schools. We will always need the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker. Not everyone needs to go to college. The problem is that a good butcher should be worth as much as a good lawyer. Anyone who does his job well should be paid well.

"The best advice I can give anyone is the same advice my grandmother gave me and I gave my children: get that education, whether it be for a profession or a trade, but get the education and then do your job well!"

Albrier: Yes. My grandmother and the people I came in contact with, like Dr. Washington, Dr. Carver, and all of those great teachers that I didn't know were so great at the time. But they had a lot to do with the molding of the youth that came under their jurisdiction in those days. I was one of them that they helped mold.

Chall: Was it a conscious goal of yours to help mold during the time--almost fifty years that you've been active in the Berkeley area? Has that been one of your goals?

Albrier: Yes. It's been one of my goals to make things better, to open doors, to skillfully promote love and respect among people, regardless of what colors or race they were. Because I saw so much disappointment and pain, in the South and in other places, between the races. I felt that that just shouldn't be. And that we weren't born to have those things happen, so we should do our part to eliminate them.

Chall: It takes a lot of effort to be as active as you've been all these years. It doesn't come easily. It takes hours of planning and preparation, phoning, picking people up--you know all the things you've been doing all these years. You're bound to have done them all. Was there ever a time when you got just plain tired and thought, "I can't carry this any longer"?

Albrier: I begin to feel that way now.

Chall: Now?! [Laughs] At least now, after nearly three hours of talking. Now, after nearly fifty years of community work, maybe you can deserve to feel a little tired, but you never did, in the years before? It was stimulating and not too arduous?

Albrier: No, in the years before, I knew that it was a struggle--from the lives of people I read, like Frederick Douglass. I read his life and saw how he accomplished things. And all of the great leaders--Booker T. Washington. I saw people come up around me. You realize that life is a struggle and that you have to keep going. You have to ask God for the strength, and I think He gives you the strength and the inspiration to keep going and to do things. Because it becomes a part of you, and you get your pleasure when you see that things have come into effect that you have worked for.

I see people, like some of the young people that I know, who are making good, who are inspired to do things for their community, in humanities. I could see part of me in them. That's what I get and that's what I'm grateful for.

Chall: So you know that you've inspired many people in this community? You realize that?

Albrier: Yes, I think so.

Chall: Do you look back, then, with satisfaction on having achieved the goals that you set out to achieve?

Albrier: Well, I think I've achieved the goals--a great many of them. I've seen results. I've seen these different changes. I set out to change things and to help make the changes. So, I'm very thankful that I've lived to see these things happen that I've worked for and fought for, never thinking that I would see them.

Chall: That is gratifying.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: Do you have any leadership techniques? Do you press an idea? Do you contact people all the time? Do you follow through once you get your organization going? Are you a pusher and a nagger? [Laughter] How do you manage it?

Albrier: That's the hardest part in getting into organizations--you have to keep at people. You have to beg and plead with them. You have to get them to realize that what you want them to do and that what they're working for is worthwhile, and that they will get some benefit out of it. Because a great many of them say, "Well, what will I get out of it if I join the organization and I work like you do? What benefit?" Then you have to be skillful enough to show them the benefits that they will receive within themselves--the happiness they will get in accomplishing something within themselves.

If you are going out to have a conference or seminar, and impart certain information to people who need it--if that's accomplished, you have that pleasure of knowing that, and you'll get great pleasure out of it.

Chall: You know it from experience.

Albrier: Yes.

Appointments to Community Agencies Today, 1978

Chall: I think, Mrs. Albrier, that in the past four years, you were the first black appointed to the Herrick Hospital Board of Trustees, is that right? And that you have been active as a Senior Center assistant in Berkeley's Department of Aging.

Oakland Tribune, November, 24, 1975

Problems of Being Old, Black and Poor

By ELAINE REED

In the past five years Fred Tillman, who lives in Berkeley, figures his taxes have shot up from $200 to almost $1,000. Tillman is retired and lives on a fixed income.

Willie Sanders knows that there are a lot of old people who either have to go without food part of the time in order to pay their utility bills, or they have to live in a cold house in order to buy food. Sanders is president of the South Berkeley Senior Citizens Council.

Susie P. Gaines, director of the South Berkeley Senior Center, is familiar with the problems of the aged. And most of them, she said, "center around money." The center serves hot dinners to about 100 senior citizens— fifty cents if you have it and nothing if you dont— five days a week.

Ethel Harris works in Oakland, finding community service jobs for people 55 years of age and over. She is convinced there are a lot of old people eligibe for aid— federal, state, city—but they don't know it.

All of these people—Tillman, Sanders, Gaines and Harris—were present for the opening session of a two-day Western Region Conference dealing with the problems of the "Black Aged" at the Marriott Inn in Berkeley on Friday.

Frances Albrier of Berkeley was chairman of the conference. Albrier said the problems of black aged center around "health, income and housing." And according to the chairman, the problems of aged blacks in the Bay Area are similar to those confronting them in other parts of the country.

A closer look at Tillman's situation reveals that, in 1952, while he was employed as a pipe fitter, he bought his home for $13,000. At that time, it was well within his income.

Tillman has been retired for a few years now and he finds it increasingly difficult to meet the overall costs of living. "If you're under 65 perhaps you can find some additional employment," he said, "but when you're retired and over 70 it makes a big difference." He is a member of a senior citizens groups working on low cost housing.

One of the reasons the conference was organized, Albrier noted, is that the aged blacks are the victims of historical oppression. Discrimination forced them into



Tribune photo by BILL CROUCH

Willie Sanders and Frances Albrier exchanged notes at the two-day Western Region Conference for the Black Agedin Berkeley

Special Needs of Black Aged

Continued From Page 27

low paying jobs, she said, and often they did not qualify for Social Security. Therefore, she explained, the aged black is subject to greater problems and "that's why we need this conference."

Sanders spends a good share of his time working on behalf of senior citizens. He's a member of the advisory council to the State Commission on Aging, serves on the Commission on Aging in Berkeley and, he said, "please don't leave out my church." He's a trustee and teacher at Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church of Oakland.

Sanders said most blacks have worked all their lives at jobs that paid much less than those held by Caucasians and most of them have been unable to put away money for their old age. And he said with the high cost of living—property taxes, utility rates and food—they are barely able to make ends meet.

"Housing is often below standard," Sanders noted, "and they are unable to remodel their homes because of the high rate of interest. Physically they're not able to receive adequate health care because the rates are so high and if they're lucky enough to find a little job to supplement their Social Security, they are penalized with $1 taken away for ever $3 they get and this bottles them in so they cannot meet their needs."

Sanders said that because "50 years ago economic barriers as well as built-in segreation" prevented many blacks from getting an education, they are now victimized by hard-pitched salespersons who talk them into buying things and, because they don't read the fine print, they pay more for interest than the product they buy.

He is in hopes that young blacks coming out of college will join together with the old and help them overcome many of their problems.

Harris pointed out that many of the black aged are living in areas where they are not being informed of services that are available to them. "We want to let them know we can help. Many don't understand the red tape procedure, and don't know how to go about getting benefits."

Keynote speaker at the conference was Hobart C. Jackson, founder and immediate past chairman of the National Center on the Black Aged. On Saturday, Dr. E. Percil Stanford of San Diego spoke and showed his film, "To Be Old, Black and Alive." Dorothy Pitts was co-chairperson of the conference.

291c

PORTABLE MEALS
SENIOR CENTER OF BERKELEY
1949 UNIVERSITY AVENUE
848-0347 94703

July 23, 1970

Dear Mrs. Albrier:

On my behalf, as well as the Advisory Committee and all who are a part of Portable Meals, we wish to thank you for your many services to the program. It is only because of the support of good people like yourself that we have been able to continue this much needed service. Your first help to us was in making our service known throughout the community. Through arranging publicity and also by your close contact with people in all parts of Berkeley I have received much assistance, which has been invaluable to me. Through your contact with the San Francisco Foundation for Aged Colored People we received a very generous contribution, which enabled us to assist more Berkeley seniors.

Frances, you have been so very kind about never saying "no" to me when, in an emergency, I have asked you to substitute as a driver for the service. Not only have you delivered meals, but you are aware of other needs of these people, and this is as important as the food.

For me to know and work with such a fine person as you has been a rewarding experience and a great pleasure.

So may it ever be.

Sincerely

Ann Frulan

Ann Frulan
Coordinator of Portable Meals

AF:mr

The Nugget, January 1, 1972

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON AGING

By Frances Albrier, Delegate

Older people spoke their minds loud, clear, and aggressively about the problems that concern them such as income, medical and dental costs, housing, nutrition, and transportation. The 3,400 delegates made recommendations to put a floor on income; to boost social security 25% and to insure comprehensive health security for all Americans without regard to age or to economic status. President Nixon's speech was truly inspiring. He touched on all of the needs of the older American: increasing their incomes; providing help on their taxes and providing adequate nursing homes. Nixon went on to say that, The older Americans in our midst have been pioneers and builders during a period of dramatic change and severe testing. They remind us of the moral values and personal qualities which have been the basis of our National Achievements. Having learned to live with change and challenge, they offer us, now and for the future, a valuable resource of skill and of wisdom." The delegates will be looking forward to the President, the U. S. Commissioner on Aging, the Senate and the Congress to fulfill their promises to the Older Americans by responding to their needs as recommended at the 1971 White House Conference on Aging.

Chall: I'm not sure that I'm going to tire you out any further with that today, unless you want to tell me at least how it came about that you became the first black to integrate the Herrick Hospital Board of Trustees. We were discussing yesterday how you were integrating so many organizations, and we didn't take that up. Do you want to give me just a few more minutes? Then I'll let you go. I feel we should hear about that, at least.

Albrier: A great many blacks look at me and they ask the same question. How come you are the first black and why did they ask you to serve on Herrick? Or Chaparral House?

Chall: Chaparral House--I don't know what that is.

Herrick Memorial Hospital Board of Trustees, 1972

Albrier: Well, I didn't ask, myself, to serve on them. I wasn't thinking of serving on the Herrick board. But it happened that the chairman of the Committee on Aging [of the City of Berkeley Social Planning Department], Sophy Kagel, became so inspired and enthused with my activities on the Committee on Aging and getting certain things done. She was the chairman, and I would take on obligations and help her to get these things done. And in a quiet way.

There had been some talk--the idea had been expressed on that board--that they should have a black on the board. They had been criticized at Herrick for not having any representative in the community on that board.

A great many of the people on these boards--white people on these boards--have not come in contact with the quiet type like me, who's not going to raise a lot of sand and say a lot of things, and criticize a lot of people for this and that and the other.

They've seen the other type, and they're kind of afraid. They stay clear of them. I think Mrs. Kagel convinced that board that she knew somebody who could work on the board, and work with them, and would take it, and was a member of the community, and who the community would respect if she did say something or talked.

So, she submitted my name to the board and told them she thought I was the person that should serve on that board from the community; that I was serving as Model Cities Director, elected by the community. Because that board has many doctors;

Albrier: a lot of people who are quite sensitive. A lot of people who haven't worked with blacks. They may have worked with professionals, like a white doctor would with a black doctor.

So, when I met the board and they questioned me, they decided they would like for me to be on the board. I was alone, had been in Berkeley a good many years, and seen that hospital grow. Even my son had delivered newspapers there, as a newsboy, to a doctor. I couldn't think of the doctor's name, but they did. This doctor wanted him to deliver his paper every Sunday morning at six o'clock. He read his paper and he always had a nice, red apple sitting out there for him.

I was recommended by Dr. Fitzroy Young, a black doctor, who served many years at Herrick; also by the chairman, Dr. Suren Babington. They decided they would like for me to become a member and serve on the board. That's how I became a member of the board. I was as surprised as anybody else.

Chall: Have you enjoyed the experience?

Albrier: I've enjoyed it very much. I enjoy it now that they know that I still work with the seniors at the Senior Center. I have the committee for seniors' relations in the hospital. We are now going into the phase of sensitivity of seniors and older people. Because there's been some comments of some people working in the hospital being very hostile and harsh with older people. They can't move as fast, or they may not answer you. It may be because they just don't hear you. And they have impatient young people who get impatient with them, so they're having that type of course now. We've just finished the course on hearing.

[Insert from beginning of tape 5, side 1]

Albrier: A great many seniors lose their hearing. They can't hear and go within themselves and isolate themselves, and don't take a part in organizations or meetings, or anything because of their problems with hearing.

Chall: Yes, even with friends, they stop talking.

Albrier: We got that completed. Now we have educated the doctors and the staff on the sensitivity of older persons.

Chall: In general.

ALbrier: In general. One of the evaluators, a communications person on the staff, had called committees. They are going to have a conference on that, because a great many people--nurses and others--

Albrier: don't realize that the elderly persons are different. They live in a different world. The approach to them is different. They're slower and they can't keep up with the gait of the generations just ahead of them now. The staff and the nurses--even the doctors --have to realize that. In the next few years, there will be a whole generation--thousands more people coming into the field of the elderly. And they're living longer.

Then we discuss the mental patients--the mentally ill. I was so glad that Governor Brown [Edmund G., Jr.] appropriated that money for the hospital--for Napa--because a great many mentally ill, elderly people are in that hospital. Some of them have been sent out to nursing homes, long-range nursing homes. They're the type of persons you have to know just how to keep up with and to tolerate and to help them.

Chall: I notice the Federal Commission on, I guess it's Equal Rights, indicated that it was the elderly who weren't getting proper attention in hospitals, mental clinics, in all sorts of things that we wouldn't even think about in terms of equal opportunities. The commissioners said that when there's a question of money, government agencies usually put the money into mental health programs for children and young people rather than for elderly, because of the feeling children have to be taken care of. But they claimed that many of the elderly could be pretty self-sufficient if they were given some proper help, which at present, they don't get.

Albrier: That's right.

Chall: So you're raising the consciousness, as they say today.

Albrier: We're raising the consciousness of the hospital and the staff. That came from the board of trustees. Dr. [Leland H.] Cohen was the one who appointed a Committee on Health Care Services for Senior Citizens, and appointed me chairman. So we developed one thing to the other.

We did the study on the hearing last year. We sent the hearing pamphlets out to every senior center. We gave out information in the Nugget--that's the little paper, tabloid, put out by the senior center. It was 600 mailings: 300 went to Emeryville; they went to El Cerrito; some went to Oakland. Every doctor on staff got them. Social Services received them, and senior organizations. We distributed them all around.

Chall: That was the announcement of the opportunity to be tested by the hearing specialists?

Albrier: Yes. And where the audiologists were. In Herrick, they have an audiology department--vision and audiology. They received many calls in that department.

Chall: That's a way for you to know whether your material is read, too, isn't it?

Albrier: Yes. Some people called in and asked for more leaflets to give to others, so we know that the public appreciated it.

Now we're going into the care of elderly people. A great many of the younger people don't have the patience with elderly people. They forget that they are slower. For instance, in the morning, when it's time to get breakfast, they just push the pan down--the soap and the water and go. When they come back, if they haven't gotten up enough energy to wash their faces, they take it and go on. The elderly person's distressed all day because they're treated that way and they don't dare say anything.

Chall: Oh my, that's no help to getting better, is it?

Albrier: No. That's right. They have to realize that they're working in this ward where these elderly people are, and they're slower in their gait and they may be harder to understand. And even the practice of calling people by their first names: Nursing staff come in and say, "Jane, why haven't you washed your face?" These seniors were probably the type of person that grew up with more respect for an elderly person than calling them by their first name, right off the reel.

Chall: It is a little startling to be called by your first name by a nurse whom you've never met before.

Albrier: Yes. She sees it on your chart and comes in and says that. She forgets that these elderly persons are from a different school. All of those things will be brought up now. At Herrick now, the whole patient staff is in on this, so they decided to have a conference. They have skits. The skits will be made up of the elderly themselves.

Chall: It's acting out what they've experienced?

Albrier: Yes. We discuss them. Then they discuss volunteers coming into the hospitals who have been trained to talk to the elderly patients and those who don't have families, or families who are too busy to see them on time. They're low in spirit.

Chall: Is that a project for the senior centers?

'New Ways to Older Hearts' discussed



Mrs. Frances M. Albrier opens the meeting.

"If you live, you will be senior citizens someday," Mrs. Frances M. Albrier told the audience at the "New Ways to Older Hearts" meeting. Mrs. Albrier, chairman of the board of trustees' committee on health care services to senior citizens, added, "Today, we are pioneering for senior citizens who will come along after we are gone."

The two hour gathering focused on the interrelationship of a hospital and its older patients. The program explored problems and possible solutions in health care delivery. Portions of the meeting were videotaped for staff training programs.

Problems were dramatized in a skit where Barbara Hail, emergency service clerk, offered the hospital staff point of view as she attempted to help a rapid succession of imaginary patients to the background noise of a tape recording made in the emergency service.

Mrs. Albrier and Advisory Trustee Ruth Scheer then acted the parts of two older patients discussing the various difficulties experienced in a hospital. The two described the effects of having a hearing problem and being yelled at, of "waiting, waiting and not knowing what's going to happen," and of being "just terrified of hospitals."

Group discussions, where hospital staff intermingled with older people, brought forth many answers to the question -- "If you were running a hospital what things would you do to ... create a climate and an atmosphere of trust ... and to better meet the needs of older persons?"

The suggestions, presented by spokesmen from the groups, included a wide range of concerns. Opportunities for recreation, explanations for moves and procedures, and asking patients about their needs were suggested by one group. Assistant Director of Volunteer Services Mrs. Betty Yourd spoke for another group, recommending an information board in the lobby, large-print handouts about procedures, and asking the patient whether the use of the first or last name was preferred.

Carolyn Wehrmeister, patient activities, mentioned problems with paperwork, delays in response to nurse calls and transportation difficulties for older people. Linda



"New Ways" participants include, from left, James Mayfield Kaye, Mrs. Sam (Sophy) Kagel, Mrs. Barbara Boscovich and Mrs. Susie Gaines.

Wolfe, R.P.T., suggested the use of permanent registration plates, the addition of more senior Volunteers in the lobby to help new patients settle in, and improvement of education programs for both patients and staff.

A three-member panel responded to the suggestions. Mrs. Susie Gaines, a member of the board's committee, told the hospital staff in attendance, "You are the instruments of the hospital -- your hands are important, your voices are important, your hearts are important."

Mrs. Barbara Boscovich, Tele-Care supervisor, said activities for patients, quick response to nurse calls and friendly visiting by Volunteers were all areas of possible improvement. Mrs. Sam (Sophy) Kagel, also from the trustees' committee, emphasized the importance of improved discharge planning which, she said, should include the older patient's family.

Closing the "process of discovery meeting," Mrs. Albrier said that more needed to be done to "help you understand the patient and help the patient understand the hospital. Older people need tender loving care, but, above all, I ask you to remember human dignity."

the herrick cross

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the herrick cross is published to keep our employees and Inservice Volunteers informed of hospital news and events and to recognize them for personal or team achievements.

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Albrier: No, it will be a project of the hospital, of Herrick Hospital. Herrick Hospital has more minority patients than any in the Bay Area. They have more aged.

Chall: Is that because of the population of Berkeley?

Albrier: Yes. The population of Berkeley. The last census shows 16,000 people who were over sixty-five in Berkeley. And many of those are ill. Herrick is getting so many who come in who have heart problems. You see, they have a heart ward there, intensive care. It's full all the time. The majority are elderly patients.

Chall: So they just have to practice a different kind of medicine.

Albrier: Besides those who have strokes, and those they have to rehabilitate. That's where the hearing came in, and the vision came in, and the use of their limbs came in.

Chall: Is there a special branch of nursing now for geriatrics?

Albrier: Yes, there is. Scholarships are being given to nurses who are going into geriatric training.

Chall: That will help. But then you can't staff a large hospital with special geriatric nurses.

Albrier: No. But a lot of the nurses are taking the courses. The University of California has given several courses on geriatrics. It's kind of a new field and they're coming into it.

Chall: This is the first time--really the first generation that has become old enough to be considered seniors in such a large number as we have now. As you say, there'll be more and more of them.

Albrier: Then we have seniors who develop with their families--stress. So many families have troubles--the younger people are with them and they have the stress of livelihood, making ends meet, families --and that falls in on the older person. Pretty soon, they have a stroke or something like that. They're hospitalized. Those who are permanently disabled are sent to the nursing homes. That's something else we have to deal with.

Then there's the mental patients. It's not their fault; it's just a breakdown in the body--the nerves of the brain; the cells start deteriorating and they become mentally ill. We have four mentally ill patients in our center now. They're not old. Two of them are; another two are not. We have two of them who are under fifty-five. The others are sixty-five or sixty-four. They come to the center. They live near the center where I am. We can tell when they haven't had their medication because all of them are

Albrier: talkative and argumentative. They get into arguments with other seniors, and they're talkative. They'll sit and talk and talk. They'll get on a subject they think about and talk.

It annoys the other seniors because they want to play cards. They get furious and often I have to tell them about these patients and that we must have some compassion, and just don't pay any attention to them. That's the trouble. Then they say, "Oh," and finally they get used to them when they start, and ignore their annoying them.

Chall: They become talkative when they haven't had their medication?

Albrier: Yes, they become talkative. There's one who said something to me once. "Mrs. Albrier, so and so [she knows my name]. . . ." And I said, "I don't know, dear." "Don't call me dear! I don't like to be called dear." She went on and on about that. [Laughter] If I hadn't known her, she would have frightened me--I would have become angry with her, or started arguing with her. So we have the trouble of keeping the other seniors quiet, and letting them know what the trouble is, and telling them to just ignore those who are disturbed and go on about their business. They just sit there and talk and talk. When they get tired, they get up and do something else.

Chall: How do you know they are mental patients? Have you been told when they come in or do you just learn it?

Albrier: No, you know by their actions that they're mentally ill. When they register, we ask who their doctor is and the nearest relative. If they become too talkative or argumentative--get in too much trouble with other seniors--we ask the relatives something and they tell us, inform us, about them, and about their habits. One habit is that of wandering off, leaving the center.

Chall: That's a very good way of knowing if someone has problems.

Albrier: We never tell them they can't come. We make them feel welcome, and tolerate them. That's why all the new seniors come in to lunch. Sometimes they start in at lunchtime. One we had--we had to call the police. One was an alcoholic. One day she brought her big dog--a great, big, beautiful dog--stood that high--right at lunch time.

The dog laid down by her. Some other seniors came. We have a Russian lady. She can't speak much English, but she saw the dog and had fits, went to the desk and said,"No dog where eat! No dog where eat!" In Berkeley they have security police, community police that do things in the community and check out some problems in

Albrier: communities. So we just called them. One of them came over, went to her and talked to her, and said, "The dog can't stay while you're eating." So, he went on out with her and the dog. That saved us. She probably would have resented one of us and think we just didn't like her dog.

Chall: [Laughs] Well, you certainly have learned a lot.

Albrier: Yes.

[end insert tape 5, side 1]

Chaparral House

Chall: What's Chaparral House?

Albrier: Did I give you one of those pamphlets?

Chall: Yes. I was reading it this morning. That was something I didn't know anything about.

Albrier: Chaparral House is the new senior home--we call it a home--for seniors who become disabled. It came out of the idea of Strawberry Creek Lodge, after it was built. Some of the board of directors, like Mrs. Wallace Johnson, the president, had watched people move into Strawberry Creek Lodge--seniors--and after a period of years--seven or eight years--become disabled. They may come down with a siege of rheumatism, or arthritis, or kidney infection, or something, and they have to go into a nursing home or a place where they get medication, and care. If they get them in time, they can stay three or four months in a nursing home of that type, and they get them back on their feet again, and they can go back into their apartments.

It's a type of a nursing home--home-like nursing home. It will not have any of the atmosphere of a clinic or a nursing home. It will be just as near to them coming out of their own home or apartment into another home as possible.

Chall: That sounds very good.

Albrier: It will be a kind of model for new homes that are being built.

Chall: Was that built with federal funds?

Albrier: No.

Chall: Is that one of the satellite homes?

Albrier: No.

Chall: How is it built?

Albrier: It's built by contributions and a foundation.

Chall: How very fine. It has a board?

Albrier: Mr. and Mrs. Johnson gave the land. They owned that land and they donated that land.

Chall: Which Johnson is that?

Albrier: Mr. and Mrs. Wallace Johnson.

Chall: The former mayor's wife?

Albrier: The former mayor's wife. Marian is her name.

Chall: My, that does sound fine.

Albrier: That was a brainchild of hers and his. He helped.

Chall: And it has a board of directors?

Albrier: Yes, and I'm on the board of directors.

Chall: Are you the only black?

Albrier: She chose me to be on it--yes.

Chall: And you're the only black member on it?

Albrier: Yes. Others will be appointed.

Chall: I see. I'm glad to know that.

Albrier: I met her at the center--in the senior center.

Chall: Was she active in it?

Senior Centers and the Committee on Aging

Albrier: She was one of the people that worked with the first senior center that was started in Berkeley some years ago. They only had $5,000 and had the center in a church. Then they went broke and they couldn't keep it up.

Then, when Wallace Johnson became mayor, he appointed seven people in the city as a committee on aging. [1967] And I was the only black on that. We studied the situation in Berkeley and decided that we needed in Berkeley, after making a research of the seniors--32,000 seniors in Berkeley, sixty-five and over--that we needed a multi-purpose senior center.

At that time, the government had given so much money to states--to the state commissions on aging. Janet Levy has always been interested in senior centers down in this area. She was on the board of the state commission on aging and she gave us the information that they would need if we wrote a proposal. We were advised that the commission would give us $15,000 for three years, if it was matched. So we went to the city council and they said they would match it. That made $30,000 a year. That's when we established the multi-purpose senior center.

Chall: That's been a very fine project here, the senior centers. Probably models, too.

Albrier: Yes.

Chall: I noticed from the papers that you went out on a rainy day about a few months ago and dedicated the new centers.

Albrier: Oh, the senior center?

Chall: It wasn't pouring rain like this today, but it was pretty muddy, wasn't it?

Albrier: The rain started later in the evening, but not at the time of the ground breaking.

Chall: Yes, there was an article in the Tribune that I saw. Is there anything else you want to say in conclusion, now that you know we're concluding? Just anything you feel that you should add here before we close the tape.

Oakland Tribune, December 17, 1977

Senior Center Ceremonies

Tribune Berkeley Bureau

"Count Us In," read the little yellow buttons worn by some of Berkeley's elderly citizens and that is just what the city did yesterday with a historic series of groundbreakings at three locations across the city for the South Berkeley, West Berkeley and North Berkeley senior centers.

The $3.5 million project was officially launched under threatening skies when senior citizen Frances Albrier brandished a gold shovel trimmed in Christmas red and green and tossed the first spadeful of rain-softened dirt with a resounding "whoopee!"

She was assisted in the project by another senior, Susie Gaines, and by Willie Sanders, president of the South Berkeley Center Advisory Council.

Introduced by Mayor Warren Widener, Mrs. Albrier then took the microphone and said, "I feel today like Dr. Martin Luther King did when he gave his great speech, 'I have a dream.' This has been a dream of mine for a long time."

The first ceremony at the South Berkeley location at Ashby and Ellis was followed by equally emotional gatherings at the West Berkeley Center at Hearst and Sixth Street and the North Berkeley site on Hearst and Grove Street.

Widener and a host of dignitaries, including City Council Members Gilda Feller, John Denton, Susan Hone and Shirley Dean, traveled from site to site on a minibus throughout the long afternoon which ended with a reception at the Civic Center for which the seniors had been busy baking all week.

City department heads, members of Berkeley's Commission on Aging and a representative from the state Department of Aging in Sacramento were on hand for the event. A special guest was former Council Member Henry Ramsay, now teaching law at the University of Colorado, in Denver, who had been instrumental in pushing through the legislation to make the project a reality.

The centers will provide multipurpose space and facilities for a variety of programs, including recreational, legal, health, educational and social. Each center will serve daily hot lunches and each has been designed to meet the special physical needs of the aged.

The North and South senior centers are being financed by the federal Public Works Program while the West Berkeley Center is being funded by federal Community Development and Title V, Older American Act, grants.

Berkeley first became involved with programs for the aged in 1952 when the city assumed administration of a private program operated by four professional women's clubs. In 1963, the first senior center was opened in a Durant Avenue church.

As the Rev. James Stewart, pastor of McGee Avenue Baptist Church, said at the invocation, "This is a reminder that Berkeley takes care of its own."

Albrier: I've been very happy to share my experiences with the people and with The Bancroft Library--to go in their history.

Chall: I'm happy to have been the catalyst through which you could share it too, believe me. It's been a real pleasure for me. I've learned a lot.

Transcriber: Marie Herold
Final Typist: Marie Herold

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Wage Rate Analyst with the Twelfth Regional War Labor Board, 1943-1945, specializing in agriculture and services. Research and writing in the New York public relations firm of Edward L. Bernays, 1946-1947, and research and statistics for the Oakland Area Community Chest and Council of Social Agencies 1948-1951.

Active in community affairs as a director and past president of the League of Women Voters of the Hayward Area specializing in state and local government; on county-wide committees in the field of mental health; on election campaign committees for school tax and bond measures, and candidates for school board and state legislature.

Employed in 1967 by the Regional Oral History Office interviewing in fields of agriculture and water resources. Project director, Suffragists Project, California Women Political Leaders Project, and Land-Use Planning Project.