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All Quotes - We Exist: Series 3

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**WE
EXIST**

The Black Church, Maine's Black Residents and the Wider Community

Series 3: The Black Church—Quotes

Welcome to the third exhibit in the series of "We Exist". In this section we have selected quotes that represent and explain Maine's Black residents' relationship with the Black church. The quotes are taken from transcripts of the oral history project "'The Home Is Where I Make It': African American Community and Activism in Greater Portland, Maine". The interview subjects are all native to Maine or are longtime residents of Maine. The original intent of the "Home Is Where I Make It" project was to highlight Black residents' history and struggle for community in southern Maine in both their formal organizational memberships and day-to-day activities. The interviews unearthed pertinent information related to the Black residents' participation in the church, and in participation tangential to the church.

The quotes center on Maine's Black residents' participation in the Black church in the form of volunteer service to help members of the wider community (the Black church as civil society), explaining their attachment to the creation of the church (the Black church and the Black family), quotes explain the economic connection between the church and its members and members of the wider community (the Black church and employment and the Black church and business community), the impact of the Black church on individual's faith and family traditions (faith and traditions), the interactions between the Black church and parishioners' involvement in church leadership and leadership in the wider community, participation in the church as regards church activities, and participation in civil rights activities (leadership, participation and activism).

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There is a brief biographical data description of each of the interviewees and a photo. The quotes that are attributed to the interviewees are arranged under the general theme, "The Black Church" Additional audio recordings related to these themes are available [here](#).



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The Black Church, Maine's Black Residents and the Wider Community

The Black Family

Ms. Odessa Barret



"Life for me as a child was bitter sweet. I was between the youngest boy and girl so I was never alone. Church was the focal point of our lives."

Ms. Odessa Barret (age 53; born 1948 in Port Arthur, Texas; born in a middle-class, blue collar family; moved to Maine in October 1979)

Keywords: family demography, Black Families, Maine

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Barret, Odessa](#)

Ms. Rose Jackson



"I'll never forget my number three son asking me what color God was; I'll never forget it. 'Mom, what color is God?' I said, 'Baby, what color do you want Him to be?' He says, 'I think I want Him the color of me.' I says, 'Okay, draw Him that color then.' And he drew a Black Jesus and a minister and his wife gave him three hundred dollars for it."

Mrs. Rose Jackson (age 66; born in Louisville, Mississippi; lives in South Portland for 39 years; married 34 years; has six children; had five children with her first husband; he died and she remarried and had a child with the current husband)

Keywords: parenting attitudes and behaviors, Black Families, Maine

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Jackson, Rose](#)

The Black Church, Maine's Black Residents and the Wider Community

The Business Community

Mrs. Emma Jackson



Interviewer: Does anyone else come to mind?

Emma Jackson: "I didn't know that many -- no, because we were church people."

Interviewer: Right

Emma Jackson: "So we were involved a lot in the church and, ah --"

Interviewer: Anyone you remember through the church who had their own businesses or, um, prominent in—

Emma Jackson: "I can remember the Richardson's but they were in Portland. They owned some kind of a cleaning service."

Interviewer: Right. The Kippys."

"...But, ah, they seemed to be prominent. But I don't -- don't really know because we really didn't know that many blacks at that time..."there wasn't that many. And we didn't -- we only knew that were involved mainly in church...One of our members owns a, ah, beauty shop...Crystal. Uncle Q's. Do I know any other black owned -- you know, I don't know any other black-owned businesses."

Mrs. Emma Jackson (age 62; born 1941 in Atlanta Georgia; lived in Maine for 46 years; has three children)

Keywords: children's experiences, Black Families, Maine

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Jackson, Emma](#)

The Black Church, Maine's Black Residents and the Wider Community

Civil Society

Reverend Albert and Clemmie Jackson



Interviewer: "As pastor of Christ's Temple, what – what do you see as the role of Christ Temple in Lewiston/Auburn? What role would you like that congregation to play in Lewiston and Auburn?"

Rev. Albert Jackson: "The -- ah, I can see the whole of our congregation reaching out to the -- to the public. They reaching out for those that are less fortunate than we are. And -- and how the division of -- of -- of making the, um, church grow -- making the congregation bigger, and, ah, -- and just reaching out to the -- and the, ah, and the, ah, the whole, um -- community... And -- and -- and actually, ah, just not staying in the four walls, but going out into -- in the, ah -- in the community and -- and make yourself known, you know. Into universities, into -- into the businesses and says, we're here. You know, you're here."

Reverend Albert Jackson (born in Slabfork, Virginia; age 61; lived in Maine for 43 years) and Mrs. Clemmie Jackson (born March 1948 in Marengo County, Alabama; age 55; lived in Maine for 3.5 years)

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Jackson, Rev. Albert and Clemmie Jackson](#)

Mrs. Joanna Boley-Lee McKenzie



"Other than Bates people -- um, yeah. Um, there is a church in Auburn, everybody refers to it as the black church. And at one time, this church would come together with my church, Trinity Episcopal Church, and -- and we would worship together. Either we'd go to their church or they would come to ours because we were both marginalized in the Catholic City of Lewiston. And, um, I believe we are the only Episcopal Church in Lewiston and there is one other in Auburn. Um, but that church would come together. They called it the black church because it always had black ministers and most of their parishioners were the black community in Lewiston and Auburn, though they have many white members as well."

Mrs. Joanna Boley-Lee McKenzie (age 66; born 1937 in Newark, New Jersey; lived in Maine for 8.5 years)

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Joanna Boley-Lee McKenzie](#)

The Black Church, Maine's Black Residents and the Wider Community

Civil Society

Mrs. June McKenzie



"Of Green Memorial Church. And before, we used to have chicken dinners every third Thursday in the month, and I used to work those. And I was a member of the ways and means for several years. And I go to church every Sunday that I'm home. I always go. Church is a very active part of my life."

Mrs. June McKenzie (age 72; born 1929 in Portland Maine; fifth-generation Mainer; lived in Maine all her life)

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: McKenzie, June](#)

Mr. Richard Tarrence



"I left high school on a scholarship, went to Ohio State. It didn't work out. Then my church gave me a scholarship to Wilberforce University in Ohio."

Keywords: family demography, Black Families, Maine

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Tarrence, Richard](#)

The Black Church, Maine's Black Residents and the Wider Community

Civil Society

Ms. Lucille Young



"I knew those kids before they was ever born. And their mother lived a pretty rough life. And the father went to jail for I don't know how many years for something he did terrible. And their mother, this little girl's mother here went to the streets. And she moved from Portland to New York City and she got killed in New York City. Some guy stabbed her right in the heart, sure did. The kids came back to Maine. And they was at the church up on the hill, Green Memorial, at that church up there..."

Ms. Lucille Young (age 73; born 1928 in Jackson, Mississippi; moved to Maine in 1967)

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Young, Lucille](#)

Ms. Rose Jackson



"And a lot of those books over there, [Uncle Frank] give them to me. And I put them in the church."

Mrs. Rose Jackson (age 66; born in Louisville, Mississippi; lives in South Portland for 39 years; married 34 years; has six children; had five children with her first husband; he died and she remarried and had a child with the current husband)

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Jackson, Rose](#)



**WE
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The Black Church, Maine's Black Residents and the Wider Community

Church Leadership, Participation and Activism & The Black Church as Civil Society

Mr. Rupert Richardson

"Well, religiously, well, I was a deacon at the Presbyterian church up on Neal Street, which is a white church. Then I came here to Williams Temple, and I'm just a member; my wife is the church mother..."

Mr. Rupert Richardson (born in Portland, Maine; living in Maine for 71 years)

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Richardson, Rupert](#)

**WE
EXIST**

The Black Church, Maine's Black Residents and the Wider Community

Employment

Reverend Albert and Clemmie Jackson



Interviewer: Okay. And are there other types of jobs that you have held? You're also pastor of –

Rev Jackson: "Yes..."

Interviewer: -- Christ Temple Church? Can you talk about that? How recent that has been? A little bit of that history?

Rev. Jackson: "It's been about a couple of weeks ago...that I was installed."

Reverend Albert Jackson (born in Slabfork, Virginia; age 61; lived in Maine for 43 years) and Mrs. Clemmie Jackson (born March 1948 in Marengo County, Alabama; age 55; lived in Maine for 3.5 years)

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Jackson, Rev. Albert and Clemmie Jackson](#)

The Black Church, Maine's Black Residents and the Wider Community

Faith

Mr. James Mathews



"Well, I believe special things is that we all seem to have a bond here in this area. And I think that when you use the term African American, I believe that you're really saying something now because we have African people here as well as the people that migrated here, either from slavery or whatever, that are called African American. And I think that when we all seem to get together it's quite a joyful time. And I think most of the time that we get together is due mainly, although we all, you know, we have different faiths, but I believe the Christian aspect of our faiths is what is more telling. I think that when we get together either at Williams Temple or Green Memorial or at their church, there's so much joy in praising the Lord that it's just such a special time that we all have. And it's quite an eye-opener for me as a person to see the different customs, the different clothing, although I'd been familiar with kente cloth and stuff like that before. But to see the outfits that are around today up close and personal, it's really an eye opener."

Mr. James Mathews (age 59; born 1941 in Portland Maine; married with five children; lived in Maine all his life – lived in South Portland for over 26 years)

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Mathews, James](#)

Ms. Lucille Young



"...And I sold that house, and I got a whole lot of money, and I went and paid for the one I got now. And I said I wanna thank god. Every day I thank God. I say if I had a thousand tongues, I couldn't than Him enough because I bought that house in likne '88 and I lost my job in '91. I'm living on social security and a pension now. If I hadn't bought that house I couldn't pay a mortgage today, tax, insurance. I couldn't do it; I'd be in the street. So I wanna thank God for lifting me up, to be able to work and earn money enough to take care of myself. So today I'm very happy, very happy. And I got a good church and I've got a house..."

Ms. Lucille Young (age 73; born 1928 in Jackson, Mississippi; moved to Maine in 1967)

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Young, Lucille](#)

The Black Church, Maine's Black Residents and the Wider Community

Faith

Ms. Rose Jackson



"But we're coming a long way. I still do a day's work now with people, you know. And I clean my church, I do the church. It makes me feel good to have a church home to come to. And have Christian people that you can turn to when you're in need and wanna talk to somebody. That's what it's all about. Having somebody that you could talk to. Sometime, sometime it gets so lonely. Me and my husband will sit there and he says, 'Honey, somebody should call us,' you know. 'That's okay, we got God on our side.' You know, like that. I've got a thing that I do every morning when I wake up. I say good morning. 'Good morning, Jesus; thank you for sending your angels down to wake me up.' You know, that's just something I thought doing it myself, because you really don't wake up just by yourself. The Lord and His angels wake you up. And it make you feel so good, you know. And we got this big double bed, and I look over and I see my husband still breathing, and I say, 'Thank you.' Because he had a stroke last year, but he's still doing good. Thank God."

"I could brag all day about how good God been to me. He really has. I'm 66 years old, and I have 6 children. And my first husband died; left me with 5 children. And I still didn't let it stop me. I went on. The Lord sent me this good husband I have now. Me and him had a daughter; she's 32 now, she's not a baby. And I didn't have no car or nothing to get to church with. But this wasn't the church I was going to go; this is a new church. We were going up at Green Memorial Church at the time. We'd catch the bus; go up to church. I don't care how bad it was, I always went to church on the bus. What would I have to lean on if I didn't have the Lord and the Christian peoples? It was hard, but the Lord sent me brother John Jackson. And he was from a home with 12 children, and 9 brothers. And you know what I do? I make a joke: I tell them I got the best one out of the 9. He's got two brothers as ministers. They have a church home in Auburn. I've been blessed. A lot of people say 'lucky,' but you're lucky when you win something and you're blessed when the Lord had did something for you. That's the way I put it. And God has always been there for me."

"And I'm jumping all around, but I can't help it. I can't help but to thank God for Reverend Coleman-our pastor we have here. He is a sweet young man. I have a son the same age he is. You know, we was wondering what we was gonna do for a minister; we wondered. Done had but one little room in this building here. Now you think about it now. How good God been. And he sent this young man from Louisiana to the mill....

The Black Church, Maine's Black Residents and the Wider Community

Faith

Ms. Rose Jackson [continued from previous page]



"...It's Sapphi now; it used to be another name. So before Mother Williams died, she found this young man and asked him would he be our minister, because her husband was found dead out back of the church, on the ground with a heart attack-Bishop Williams. So now Reverend Coleman decides to take over there, and look what God have did for us since he took over. Fourteen years. You know."

"And I could brag all day on the Lord because a human didn't do it, the Lord did it. And he's a good man. Reverend Coleman will be there; he's there for us all the time, regardless. I say, 'Thank God he's saved because somebody call on me like that, I don't know can I do it all the time. You know. I'm there for people, though. My main thing now is visiting the older peoples that are older than I am. In nursing homes and convalescent homes, whatever.'"

"That's the worse thing in the world putting a child in the ground. I didn't know what to do; I said, 'Lord, what is I going to do?' So one day I went for a walk. And we got a seaside nursing home by the water over there and we got a big beach sitting out there. And I was sitting down. 'Lord, why did you take her?' I'm just rocking back and forth. 'Lord, why did you take her?' And God knows if I had a Bible, I'd put my hand on it. This voice come to me and said, 'My child, she wasn't yours in the beginning; I only loaned her to you.' I thought somebody was talking with me. And I looked around; I didn't see nobody. And I got all shaky like. Then I heard this other voice, 'Look around you, my child.' And you know what was behind me? A nursing home with peoples in there didn't even know their names. And I got up and I went in that nursing home, and after that day I said, 'Lord, thank you; I will never complain no more because I thank you for the 41 years you gave me with her.' If everybody could think that way, you know. Last year, my husband had a stroke in May, my oldest son was in a coma 31 days, but I kept on going. And I had a friend that looked at me. I belongs to a grange out in Westbrook, and we were there at the meeting and she kept looking at me. And I said, 'Why are you looking at me like that?' She said, 'How can you smile and talk when all this trouble, you know, like it is?' And I said, 'That's because I know the Lord.' And she said, 'I know Him, too.' 'And, but see, I serves Him. And when you serve Him, you got the best friend in the world when you got Him to talk to.' A many a day I have got in my car and just parked and read my Bible and thank Him for the thing he did..."

The Black Church, Maine's Black Residents and the Wider Community

Faith

Ms. Rose Jackson [continued from previous page]



"...That night that she died she was in a coma with her eyes open. Me and my husband went into this hospital room, got on our knees, and said, 'Lord if you ain't gonna make her whole again-get her up and make her whole again-take her home.' At 9:30, He took her home because he knowed that she couldn't live like that. Know what I mean? And God was good to me because the next morning I would have had to pull the pin on her; they had in these contrap-tions. I would have had to pull the pin because she didn't have a living will, you know what I mean? And God was good to me. I didn't have to pull the pin and always saying, 'I wonder did I do the right thing?' So the Lord brought her home. It's hard, it's hard, but ain't nothing too hard for the Lord when you call on Him. You know. He'll be there for you."

"What I did when my husband and son was in the hospital, I got my pillow and come over here to Williams Temple and got on a pew and laid down. And I was pretty upset and I already done give it to the Lord why should I keep plaguing Him about the same thing? And I said, 'Lord, it's your will, it's your will be done and thank you for what You already did.' And I got up and I walked out the church. And I said, 'Why was I keep plaguing Him?' But you know how, you're only human. But I could talk about Him all day-Jesus; that's who I could talk about all day."

"And I'll never forget the things that I used to love that my father would do to me. And he would pat me on the head and say, 'Your daddy's little worker, right?' I was 'yeah.' And I'd say, 'Daddy,' I say, 'don't ever leave me.' He said, 'You can't say that because whenever God get ready for me, I gonna have to go.' And he say, 'And vice versa; it could you be go first, you know.' And it took me so long to realize what he was saying about 'when the Lord get ready for me to go,' you know."

Mrs. Rose Jackson (age 66; born in Louisville, Mississippi; lives in South Portland for 39 years; married 34 years; has six children; had five children with her first husband; he died and she remarried and had a child with the current husband)

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Jackson, Rose](#)

The Black Church, Maine's Black Residents and the Wider Community

Faith & Impact of the Church

Mrs. Emma Jackson



"Well, I suppose we had a sense of who we were and a sense of self -- self worth anyway. And -- but, then again, I had the Lord. We were -- we were -- I was saved when I came -- well, I wasn't saved when I came here. But I got saved less than a couple of months after I got here. So I knew who God was, and I knew that God was in charge of my life. So the children were always taught that they were not substitute, or they were not inferior. So we never lived like that so we never taught that. So it -- they were able to live here. They enjoyed it. It wasn't really -- they didn't have a struggle to live here."

"Well, I was -- well, we had a very -- I was thankful. I mean, God was good to -- we had a good -- we -- we loved each other. We went on. It was a -- well, people say how did you manage to stay through all the -- the adversities here. I don't guess -- I -- I don't suppose we -- we didn't really see them as -- this was where we were placed. We continued on through ups and downs, through the struggle. We just carried the church on. We carried the church on with two members or three -- well, it was always five or six or seven...We carried on. We kept it going. So he worked. He had to work. And -- and he worked all the time he was pastor and -- too. And he worked and he pastored the church too. So we just kept it going. We would periodically have an influx of -- of people come in and he was a pastor that loved -- loved people and was always available to people and was a -- a counselor and a good, ah, manager of what we had -- what little bit we had."

"Well at first Maine was -- well, I'm not -- I'm a very -- I'm not -- I don't have -- I don't like the big city. So this I like. I've always liked Maine. I -- I didn't, ah -- in the beginning I didn't think I'd always be here. But I always liked Maine. The -- I like the comfort. The living here I liked. I liked the slow pace of living here. Grant you, we couldn't find a decent place, but you accepted that. You realized that God was in charge of life and eventually things would work themselves out. So that wasn't a big struggle. We just kept trying to -- and it's a long story. I won't go into how we bought the house and everything and how that -- but God always worked through people. Then we did that. Because for a long time we worked in an apartment -- I mean, we lived in an apartment. But I didn't find that many -- you didn't find that much -- I didn't have that many problems, per say."

"I think I find that Lewiston/ Auburn, there's a lot of, ah, witchcraft here. There's a lot of, um, dealing in a satanic, ah, ah, works here...Now, you -- it might not be obvious, but it -- you can -- you can discern that. And that's -- I've felt that here..."

Mrs. Emma Jackson (age 62; born 1941 in Atlanta Georgia; lived in Maine for 46 years; has three children)

The Black Church, Maine's Black Residents and the Wider Community

Family Tradition

Ms. Beverly Bowens



"Well, like any New England family, for Christmas we'll have a turkey, went to church. I don't think it was any different than anyone else in Maine."

Ms. Beverly Bowens (born in Maine; age 67; left at 21 years old for about 35 to 40 years and then returned to Maine)

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Bowens, Beverly](#)

Mr. James Mathews



"I believe that for my parents the big tradition at the time was getting together on Fourth of July, and going up to Sebago Lake. And we would all meet. At one time we would all meet at the church I belong to, Green Memorial AME Zion Church on Munjoy Hill. And when I first started going as a child, the church would rent a bus and we would go up there, to Sebago Lake, and all picnic together. And everybody came from far away; Washington, D.C., and other parts of our family would all come together. And that used to be the big day where everybody would get together and it was quite a 'to do.' And then as people either moved away or things started getting crowded at the lake or whatever, for me personally, the tradition kind of went by the way side. We wouldn't go to the lake, but we may see everybody up on Munjoy Hill where the Fisher family lived. We would all congregate up there and then we'd go up for the fireworks that they had on the promenade and like that."

"As far as the services in church go, just attending the service and attending. Christmas Eve. We used to attend church on Christmas Eve; not any longer. But that's one of the things that we used to do on the day before Christmas. Take the kids along. But so much has changed since the kids have left and on their own that we don't have these things any longer. That's why I'm trying to remember what it was we used to do with them. But we used to gather together and go as a group, you know. Even back in the New York City days. It was a larger group because it was my parents had four of us. There was six of us that went to all these things: Christmas, Easter services in church. I'm still talking about church."

Mr. James Mathews (age 59; born 1941 in Portland Maine; married with five children; lived in Maine all his life – lived in South Portland for over 26 years)

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Mathews, James](#)

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The Black Church, Maine's Black Residents and the Wider Community

Family Tradition

Mrs. June McKenzie



"Oh, yes we do, and they're really big. My sister in Connecticut has, what, seven children, and my sister in the islands has three, and my other sister has one. And all our families and our grandchildren and everything, we all get together on Fourth of July and have a picnic at Sebago Lake, which started out as a big church thing. Our church did it every year, and we've just kept up the tradition."

Mrs. June McKenzie (age 72; born 1929 in Portland Maine; fifth-generation Mainer; lived in Maine all her life)

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: McKenzie, June](#)

The Black Church, Maine's Black Residents and the Wider Community

Leadership, Participation and Activism

Ms. Beverly Bowens



"Actually I didn't do too much. I mean, I went to church. I did a lot in my work as a nurse. I was involved in multiculturalism in terms of recruiting nurses. There was a terrible shortage of nurses at one point. In my position, I was a director of nursing. I had a lot to do with affirmative action in my work. I tend to be quite low key. I don't like to participate where people can see me. I'm a quiet type of person, and I feel that I can accomplish much more by actually staying out of the limelight."

Ms. Beverly Bowens (born in Maine; age 67; left at 21 years old for about 35 to 40 years and then returned to Maine)

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Bowens, Beverly](#)

Mr. Edgar Anderson



"I'm not very religious. I don't go to church. My kids don't go to church; I don't make them go to church. Even though my father's mother was a preacher, like Reverend Lawson."

Mr. Edgar Anderson (Male; age 51; born 1950 in Chicago suburb called Harvey)

Keywords: family demography, Black Families, Maine

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Anderson, Edgar](#)

The Black Church, Maine's Black Residents and the Wider Community

Leadership, Participation and Activism

Mrs. Emma Jackson



Interviewer: And you are a member of Christ's Temple Emma Jackson:
"[Yes] Christ's Temple...Church."

Mrs. Emma Jackson (age 62; born 1941 in Atlanta Georgia; lived in Maine for 46 years; has three children)

Keywords: children's experiences, Black Families, Maine

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Jackson, Emma](#)

Mr. James Mathews



"Well, my pastor, Reverend Margaret Lawson. Also Reverend Steve Coleman, here at Williams Temple. The president of the NAACP, of course, Neville Knowles. There are a number of people that are leaders that work in these churches and with the NAACP, you know. Other people that I have met that I probably couldn't give you a specific name, but there are many people that lead. It just depends on the capacity that they're involved with. I believe when you have the church, your organizations that you're involved with, and so on, there are a number of leaders that even if they're not in, say, a leadership role may be a leader, a de facto leader. Someone that has a lot of influence could possibly be a leader."

"That is a good question. I think that the people at NAACP when I was president saw me as a leader. I believe that organizations that I headed at the church have seen me as a leader. So, specifically names I couldn't really say a name as to who would see me as a leader. But I believe that I have been a leader over my lifetime and I probably still have leadership qualities."

Mr. James Mathews (age 59; born 1941 in Portland Maine; married with five children; lived in Maine all his life – lived in South Portland for over 26 years)

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Mathews, James](#)

The Black Church, Maine's Black Residents and the Wider Community

Leadership, Participation and Activism

Mr. James Sheppard



"In this community. Gee. Maybe talking about politics or people in church, I don't know. Really. I would have to say as leaders I would have to choose some of the politicians that I've dealt with here as leaders."

Mr. James Sheppard (born in New York City in 1924; both his parents immigrated from Antigua in the West Indies to Canada, then they came to the United States in 1923; moved to Maine in 1971)

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Sheppard, James](#)

Mrs. June McKenzie



"I've been a member of the NAACP for 35-more than that-36 or 37 years. And I'm an active member of Green Memorial AME Zion Church."

"Well, in church I am a former class leader. I'm a member of two choirs. I used to be head of the missionary board; now I'm a trustee."

Mrs. June McKenzie (age 72; born 1929 in Portland Maine; fifth-generation Mainer; lived in Maine all her life)

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: McKenzie, June](#)

The Black Church, Maine's Black Residents and the Wider Community

Leadership, Participation and Activism

Ms. Odessa Barret



"Well, when you say African American community here in Portland, then that would put me in my church realm or in my other activism."

Ms. Odessa Barret (age 53; born 1948 in Port Arthur, Texas; born in a middle-class, blue collar family; moved to Maine in October 1979)

Keywords: family demography, Black Families, Maine

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Barret, Odessa](#)

Ms. Rose Jackson



"Well, I got a big heart. I must, I must could be a leader because I have a lot of peoples coming to me, you know, coming to me asking me different things. Would I do this for them or could I do this? Could I pray with them or could I talk to them? And especially pray, because a lot of people don't know how to pray. And as soon as they come asking me, 'Well, could I pray?' I'm right there for them. And if that's what you mean by a leader, I'm ready because them prayers is about the only way that I can make it through life."

Mrs. Rose Jackson (age 66; born in Louisville, Mississippi; lives in South Portland for 39 years; married 34 years; has six children; had five children with her first husband; he died and she remarried and had a child with the current husband)

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Jackson, Rose](#)

**WE
EXIST**

The Black Church, Maine's Black Residents and the Wider Community

Impact of the Church

Mrs. Emma Jackson



"Because it wasn't ever in the - the -- the, ah, club scenes, or any scenes like that. Actually, we live, ah, a really sheltered life. We went to church. We were involved. But the church was our main focus and our main goal. And I -- and -- and our lives were wrapped -- revolved around that..."

Mrs. Emma Jackson (age 62; born 1941 in Atlanta Georgia; lived in Maine for 46 years; has three children)

Keywords: children's experiences, Black Families, Maine

Full Length Interview: [Home is Where I Make It: Jackson, Emma](#)