

Ellen Green Remembered



Hillsborough Remembers

Geraldine Twine

by Ann Bush
August 2, 2007



This is an interview with Mrs. Geraldine Twine, president of the National Council of Negro Women of Tampa, Florida. Mrs. Twine is--. This interview is being conducted on August 2, 2007 at the Robert Saunders Library. My name is Ann Bush, and I'm a librarian with the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library system.

Ann Bush (AB): *Thank you for coming, Mrs. Twine. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this project. Could you tell me how long you knew Mrs. Green?*

Geraldine Twine (GT): Well, thank you. First of all, thank you very much for asking me to participate. I think--. I'm pretty sure I met Mrs. Green in the early '70s, when we were--, I attended several national--, Tampa section of National Council of Negro Women meeting in the old Urban League building. And at that time, she was president. So I met her--, first met her '72, '73. 1972, '73, yes.

AB: *So you've answered the question of how you met her. You were a member of the--*

GT: Well, I attended some of the meetings earlier, and I think I joined in '73. I had attended meetings earlier as a guest, to find out about the organization, and was trying to decide whether I wanted to become a member.

AB: *Do you know how long Mrs. Green was president?*

GT: Historically, in the history, it states that she was for sixteen years.

AB: *Oh! That's quite a while.*

GT: That was quite a while. She was quite a woman.

AB: *Really?*

GT: Yes.

AB: *Tell, tell me about her.*

GT: Her, her desire to help not just people of color, but to help people--. And another concern that she had was equal rights for all human beings. And it reflects back on our founders' desires when she-- Mary McLeod Bethune-- developed the organization of organizations, which is the National Council of Negro Women. And one, one of her points was equal rights and justice for all human beings. And not last, but she wanted this to become an unfettered democracy, where the laws would guarantee each citizen these equal rights. And Mrs. Green- that was a part of her life. And her testimony also is to service mankind.

AB: *What were some of her accomplishments as president of the National Council of Negro Women?*

GT: Well, one of the big things is that she held us together. And anytime a body of women [Laughter] will vote for one person for a sixteen-year old--, sixteen-year period to be their leader, says something.

AB: Yes.

GT: It says something there. And some of the things she accomplished was: she accomplished organizational strategies. And this information was--. These instructions on leadership and leadership--, teaching of leadership was given to lay people in the local--, from local churches, because at that time, there were in the--, when I joined, there might have been a fourth of the group were professionals.

There was people: Essie Few; Roweta Brady-- those people have gone on to be with the Lord-- Artess, Jesse Artess; and a few others. Jennie Webb is still alive; she was one of the members at--, during that time. Lila Johnson. They--. You could count the professionals were in--, that were in the organization. But it was basically people from Baptist, Methodist, and Catholic denominations who were not professionals.

And Mrs. Green were--, was able to teach parliamentary procedure, leadership skills. These skills were in turn (). These people who went back to their () boards and () in the black community, and were able to demonstrate and to further teach these leadership skills. And I think our community is better for that, because--. And that's some of the same kinds of things we do now. We have more professionals in our--, retired professionals in NCNW, but that's not, that's not our quest.

Our quest is for any American woman who want to join forces with us and to be a part of teaching people about health, and teaching the importance of empowering women-- the importance to the general welfare of women-- and to be a resource as to where you may find places to make your life and your family life better.

And another great concern since our founders' day was, and still is, our children. We know that our children will be the leaders of tomorrow. And unless we make sure that they're--, that the schools, and parents, and communities is doing what can be done to effectively help bring those children from one point to the other point--.

So Mrs. Green reached back at our founders--, the litany that our founders left us and taught it and lived it in this section to make us a stronger section. And today, we are doing some of the same kinds of things. We are a part of Hills--, partnering with Hillsborough County School system on Visit Your Child's Day at School. And this, this affects all children, because we speak and talk and assist parents-- all parents of Hillsborough County-- and encourage them to visit the school and talk to the teachers and do what they can to help the teachers. Ask what can I do to help you in the classroom with my child and the other children, and to make sure the children are going over their homework, and that they're passing information to the parents and back to the school to improve the communication.

I know when you ask me a question, I just go on and on, so stop me whenever you need me to, because NCNW is a very vital part of our community, and has been. And we can just go on and on, on the kinds of things that Ms. Green did, and what we're doing today.

AB: *So some of her projects were...?*

GT: Teaching leadership skills.

AB: *Right.*

GT: Making sure that equal rights that we understood as women--. Equal rights-- . And our role: to make sure that other women--

AB: *Understood.*

GT: --understood. And that the active participation and community volunteer organizations was a place to learn and a place to serve, and to better serve ourselves and our--, the incoming generations and our present communities. So I think that was a valuable, a valuable lessons. Those were valuable lessons that needed to be taught. And I wished we had a measurement, too, of some of the bright youngsters coming up would do a research project on this, because this is important for our culture.

AB: *What type of person was Mrs. Green?*

GT: Well, I guess I answered some of that. She was very energetic, a religious person who was humanitarian. An example of some of this was: she was

interested and had--. I had found out that she was interested in serving in the community, and that she had offered herself to go to Robinson High School, and to meet with groups of students. And that was early on, during the integration phase, to talk to students and to answer some of their questions, and to be there. It's called "thereness" today- to meet the individual or the group's needs. And that was one of her--.

And I believe historically, taught in her church in Port Tampa twenty-seven years Sunday school-- , a Sunday school class. And she believed in teaching the imparting of education and information would make life better for us. And she was interested in salvation and eternal life for the participants in her class. And I don't think you could be much more of a humanitarian than caring for human beings and showing that you care, by imparting your philosophy and what you thought to be right in a right way for them.

AB: *You've described Mrs. Green as energetic and a humanitarian. Can you describe what she looked like?*

GT: [Laughter] Yes. Mrs. Green was of a medium brown complexion, had (), had a mixed gray hair. She was about 5 feet 1 or 2, but always wore the high-heeled shoes early on, so [Chuckle] that might have made her 5'5" or 5'6". Impeccably dressed, her hair was always neat and in place, and always had a smile- a smile to say, "Hello, how are you?" And when she looked at you and said, "How are you?" you knew that she was speaking to you, and that she was not just being polite-- yeah-- but that she wasn't just being courteous, but she was interested in you as a person.

AB: *So when she said, "How are you?" it was really a question.*

GT: Yes! "How are you?" So if you took some time to answer her, that was perfectly all right, because that's what she'd ask you. [Laughter] And she really wanted to know, so that she would be able to help you in any way if there was something that you needed. Yes. Yes.

AB: *Do you have a favorite memory or story that you haven't told us about already?*

GT: I do, but I don't know how appropriate it is. In our organization early on, I remember having ran for Ms. NCNW during the fundraisers. And during the fundraisers, there was some discrepancies. And because I document-- . I think one person had given me 25 cents, and I had that person's name and signature and all of the documentations. When the contest was over, my documentation showed, really, that I had won the contest. And-- . But the way it turned out, I didn't really win.

And Mrs. Green knew how hurt I was, because she saw the documentation, and she could read the figures. And she said to me, "You know what- this is a blessing, because for years and years, we have heard of discretions--, indiscretions in things like this. But you documented what happened and what you really had. And so from now on, we can make this a policy, or we can make this a practice, so that we're one hundred percent sure who win--, who will win the contest, and how they win."

And so I felt pretty good about that. I felt a little disappointed, but I felt good about, Yes, she will make sure that this happens. And what it is: we raised the money, and we were able to make our--, meet our objectives. But that was one time when I saw her wisdom. And her wisdom was so good for us as a group, ().

AB: *OK. Is there anything else that we should know about Mrs. Green?*

GT: Well, I think being a caring, loving person and a humanitarian says it all. It says it all. And you would see the many, kind, kind acts, not only with me, but other people in the community- many kind acts that she did. Yes, yes. [Pause] Is there anything else?

AB: *This ends our interview.*

[END OF INTERVIEW]