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relationship between her and President Obama has also increased. Needless to say, the story of her life is incredible and inspiring, a black girl born and raised on the south side of Chicago becoming the First Lady of the United States of America. Not a dream come true because it was never in her dreams.

I did not expect to personally relate to so much in the book, but what she wrote on page 284 spoke to me: "I was humbled and excited to be First Lady, but not for one second did I think I'd be sliding into some glamorous, easy role. Nobody who has the words 'first and black' attached to them ever would. I stood at the foot of the mountain, knowing I'd need to climb my way into favor."

This called me back to a time when first and black was associated with my name, and I, too like Mrs. Obama asked myself if I was good enough. She writes, "Confidence, I'd learned then, sometimes needs to be called from within." I've repeated the same words to myself many times now, through many climbs. "Am I good enough? Yes I am."

The black doctoral student, Dr. Ben Jones, who urged me to apply for the admissions counselor job at Ole Miss in 1974, purchased my first briefcase when I got the job. He left before I could really thank and appreciate him for the gift. That gesture boosted my confidence in ways that I have not forgotten and provided just the encouragement I needed.

I had graduated and turned 22 on August 4th (same birthday as President Obama). I spent the summer of 1974 job hunting and working at my cousin's gas station on Main Street in Water Valley. As I pumped gas and cleaned front car windows, I worried what folks were thinking and found myself questioning my choice of colleges and especially my liberal arts degree. I was even more concerned about being a burden to my parents.

The university job was only the second job offer that I had received by the end of the summer. Even so, I accepted it with serious reservations and felt quite ill prepared to become the first black recruiter for the flagship university of the state of Mississippi. My work study job in the computer center as a student had given me the opportunity to work with the admissions office during registration each semester. I didn't realize that this would enable me to become familiar with the staff and the many enrollment and admissions procedures. Alas, I was afraid, not sure what to expect, what to wear, how to act, how I would be treated, and not sure if I could do the job – recruiting students, and black students in particular, to attend Ole Miss.

After much preparation, job shadowing and practice, I headed out on my own to my assigned high schools, overly concerned about how I would be received, much like how the First Lady felt when she began campaigning for her husband's run for the presidency. Being black and female, I was cautioned directly and indirectly about the likelihood of tension, resistance and racism.

I was cautioned about traveling alone across the Delta and north Mississippi to speak to students, counselors and other school personnel about Ole Miss. I had to be careful to avoid restaurants and facilities where blacks were not welcomed. I was also careful to get back home or to my hotel before dark. I had my share of encounters and survived, growing from them all. Yet, I was still quite naive but developed a level of confidence in dealing within the university environment and working across the state of Mississippi and western Tennessee. Perhaps I will write more about my travels and experiences if and when it can serve more definitive purposes.

When Mrs. Obama wrote about her undergraduate experience at Princeton in the early 1980s, again I was able to relate and sadly see similarities to my experience 10 years or so earlier: the financial aid package, the work study job, enrolling in the summers to get ahead, and the "effective study" classes in the fall where the majority of the students – black – were taught how to study. (Placement was based on recommendation of your counselor, your entrance test scores or an easy grade.) And the white roommate?

The only difference mine did not want to move out. She stayed. Alas, dealing with the classroom antics of white students, the scrutiny of white professors and just being the minority were the biggest challenges.

With the opportunity to write this column and to move forward in developing a project with four Ole Miss PhD's, first and black beckons me and calls me to press on. I have learned as the First Lady did to draw on my inner strength and to keep up the momentum as we see her doing today, for the better good of mankind and our society, to go high when others go low.

I was so naive as a black first and had no idea whether I could be effective or not. In 1974 I was the first black in administration and the only one in the administration building known as the Lyceum. When I prepared to move on in my career and began saying my goodbyes after three

## New admission counselors announced

UNIVERSITY — Two pretty, young University of Mississippi graduates are preparing for their first year of travel across Mississippi and other Southern states as Admissions Counselors for their alma mater.

Frances Permenter of Gulfport and Dottie Chapman of Water Valley—both 1974 graduates of Ole Miss—added new dimensions to the University admissions program when they began work recently. Miss Chapman is the first full-time black Admissions Counselor while Miss Permenter is the second member of her family to hold the position.

MISS PERMENTER and Miss Chapman studied sociology while in undergraduate school and they feel the courses they took will help them work with high school students who are deciding where to attend college.

Miss Permenter—who was preceded at the job by her older sister, Walterine—said "change at Ole Miss" is the key element in the admissions program.

"We've got no hours for women, the freedom to live off-campus, the growing number of activities on campus plus the

growth and change of Oxford," she said.

Miss Chapman said she will emphasize the academic points of the University.

"Ole Miss has grown academically, and I plan to tell students about that. Other schools just don't offer students as much," she said.

THE TWO new Admission Counselors are now training and will begin traveling to numerous high schools in October. Later this month, they will attend several fairs, including the Mid-South Fair in Memphis and the Mississippi

State Fair in Jackson—where school and junior college students will open booths to students as well as parents.

Miss Chapman is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Permenter of Gulfport.

Chapman of Water Valley, and

Miss Permenter's parents are

Mr. and Mrs. Walter N. Per-

menter of Gulfport.



New counselors

Mike White (left), assistant director of Admissions at the University of Mississippi, and Richard Martin, admissions counselor, discuss travel plans with the department's new counselors, Dottie Chapman (second from right) of Water Valley

and Frances Permenter of Gulfport. Miss Chapman and Miss Permenter will be discussing Ole Miss with high school students as they visit schools across the South.

plaints. I also felt a cold strangeness when families asked me to take them to Rowan Oak, William Faulkner's home for a tour. Can you imagine – funny – huh?

As years passed and folks asked me how I recruited for a white school with such a blatant history of racism and discrimination, I resolved that my role/goal became that of convincing students that college was, in my opinion, the best option to get ahead in Mississippi in the late 1970s. Providing admissions, financial aid and college entrance information was what I shared and believed that it would apply wherever students chose to apply.

I offered myself as an example, telling them that if I did it, they could too. I also assured them and sometimes their parents that I would be there for them. In the three years that I recruited, black student enrollment tripled, and I left behind recruiting tools that were duplicated by other white universities and are still being used by some today.

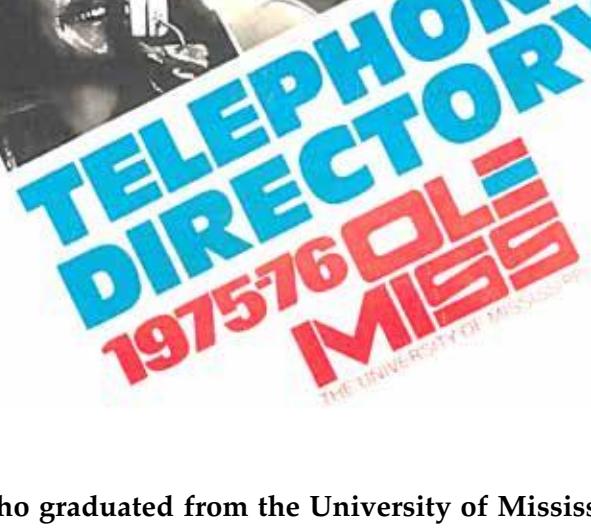
The purest irony of my first and black story is that when I graduated in the last Davidson High School Class in 1970, quite disillusioned and anxious about saying goodbye to Water Valley, seeing the world and being on my own, I caught a bus to Detroit with absolutely no intentions of going to college. Much to my chagrin a summer job or fulltime employment did not materialize, and I had to come back home just days before college classes were starting. I had only applied to Ole Miss, through their pre-college program, where I had participated two summers in a row.

With no other options, my mother dropped me at the home of a friend, Mrs. Dooley Foster in Oxford, the night before registration opened. Mrs. Foster arranged for Jennifer Jackson, a young woman and an Ole Miss student from her church, to pick me up the next morning and take me to register for college. As Jennifer and I arrived on campus and walked toward the coliseum, we ran into my homegirls, Beatrice Hawkins and Patricia Hall. The three took me under their wings and got me registered. I had no financial aid, no dorm, just a small suitcase, and I wish I could remember how little money I had. I remember I was to let my mother know how much money I needed. I hoped that I would not have to call her because I knew she did not have it, nor did I want her to try to get it.

Though I can't say this is a full circle experience just yet, I am working with Ole Miss this time around, and I will repeat the same words to myself many times now, through many climbs. Am I good enough? Yes, I am.

Thank you, First Lady!

As the Reverend Everett Kimble of Orlando, Fla. puts it: "God would not bring us to it if He did not know we could do it!"



Dottie Chapman Reed, who graduated from the University of Mississippi in 1974, became the school's first black admissions counselor. She is pictured above on the cover of the Ole Miss telephone directory.

years, one of my white sociology associates told me that I appeared to be more comfortable on the Ole Miss campus than the average white person. I found that quite disconcerting. He was so wrong. I was never comfortable. I am not comfortable in Mississippi. My mind went back to the first time I met James Meredith, touring the campus with him to see the dorm where he lived, and listening as he recounted his experience, noting the changes on the campus as best he could remember.

I also am reminded of the looks sometimes on the faces of prospective white students and parents when this afro-wearing admissions counselor bounced into the admissions office to take them on a campus tour. Most often, I was able to win them over and never heard of any com-

# POLITICAL RALLY

Saturday, July 13

CITY PARK IN WATER VALLEY

10 A.M. to 3 P.M.

CANDIDATES START SPEAKING  
AT 11:00 A.M.

Civic clubs and others also invited  
to set up and provide concessions.

For more info contact Linda Covington-Williams

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