

Emma L. Johnston

PEACE, INC. FOUNDER & COMMUNITY ACTION PIONEER

I'm Emma Johnston. I came to Syracuse, New York in the '60s. I got involved in discrimination as soon as I got here. Some people wouldn't rent to me - a colored person would, but a white person wouldn't, and the colored person would be living next door to the white person. I wanted to know why - I came from the South and got more discrimination here than I had in the South. I took my case to the state office building. When I got to the state office building, the man took the information from me and said, "What do you think I'm going to do with this?" I said, "You don't have to do nothing with it, but I'll have your job - tomorrow." So, he took it and started working on it. Then, I joined the NAACP. We fought for the rights of all people. In 1965, the Crusade for Opportunity Program started, dealing with issues like that - discrimination against all people. After Crusade for Opportunity ended, we founded PEACE, Inc. - quite a few, there's just a few of us left. PEACE, Inc. was started through federal government money - the war on poverty.

I've been involved with PEACE, Inc. since 1968. It helped people in the community. PEACE, Inc. was there to help, and the people working for PEACE, Inc. were able to help. I think PEACE, Inc. is a good program - I really do. One thing I would like PEACE, Inc. to do is get more young people involved. We have so many youth out here in the streets shooting each other. That shouldn't happen. They should be involved in something that their life will be saved. Give them something that shows them - "Look you not out there by yourself." I would like to see that in this community no matter where they are, from all sides. It don't make no difference how young they are. You'd be surprised at how a young person thinks, at 5 and 6 and 7 years old they can hold a conversation. We pray for them, but we can pray for them all we want - they don't hear us. We need to see them and talk to them and let them know what we pray about. We are the only ones who can bring them back. Sometimes we can't leave it to the parents because they hurting like the kids. We get them all together and sit down - start talking about the issues. I don't know if it'll be in my lifetime, but maybe somebody will pick it up and carry it on. I know PEACE, Inc. can do it - because they did it before. That's what I think about PEACE, Incorporated. PEACE, Inc. can do it - if we all work together. Amen!



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