

**Mississippi Narratives**  
**Prepared by**  
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**Mandy Jones - Age 80**

Yes, lady I was bawnd a slave, I was 8 years old at the s'render, an' I members lots of things from them times jes' as good. I was bawnd at Crawford, Miss., that was my nat'ral place where I was bawnd - but it was out in the country.

My pappy's name was Wesley Young an' my mammy was Jinny Young. My mammy had six chillun, two boys and four girls. I don' think any of 'em is livin, les' its my sister Sally - she went to Birmingham, an' I ain' heered from her in a long time.

I members very well when my ole Marster tole my mother, "Jinny, yo' all don' b'long to me no more, you an' Wesley and the chilluns, yo' jes' b'long to yo' selfs."

I seen the yankees too, they marched past our place, with flags flyin' an' playin' music and beatin' - what yo' call them big things as goes boom, boom - drums, yes that's what they is. They ain' no sich drums in these days as them Yankees beat on. I ain' ever seen one sence then.

Charlie Stewart was my marster's name. He was a big tall man. I members him jes' as well, seems like I can see him now.

Miss Patsy was his wife, but mos'ly we jes' called her "Missis". I 'members their house jes' as well. It sot in Noxubee County, an' was a log house with three big rooms in it. One was a dinin' room, an' one ole

Miss kep' for a sort of parlor room, she kep' all her nicest things in it. She was a chunky built lady an' wore a white lace cap all the time. She allus stayed fixed up nice. How well I does 'member her.

The cookin' was done out in a big log kitchen out in the yard. My grandmother was the cook. There was a big fireplace in the kitchen with two big iron pots, hangin' ovah the fire, and down in the coals, big iron ovens, where the bakin' was done.

All us collud folks lived in one room log cabins in the back yard - jes' a little street, for my marster only had a few niggahs 15 or 20, an' mos' of 'em was kin to me. Daddy an' mamy an' us chilluns lived in one, my grandmother in one, my uncles in another. Our cabin was at the end of the street. We all had big fireplaces, but didn' do no cookin'. My grandmother cooked all our vittles in the big kitchen when she cooked for the white folks, and we sure had plenty some tin' t' eat.

We slaves worked all the crops, cotton, corn, sweet taters, oh, the sweet taters we did have! an' wheat, we raised all our own bread. I 'members we had three kinds of flour, shorts an' seconds an' the white flour.

We didn' have no gardens of our own, because our marster had the biggest garden, we cullud folks worked it, an' we all eat from it. We had a plenty of beans and peas, an' I ain' never seen no sich cabbages in these days as growed then, great big winter cabbages. There was allus so many sides an' hams of meat left when summer come, we had to put them out to air, so' they'd keep.

All of us slaves eat in the marster's house till we was free. My grandmother cooked it all, an' after the white folks eat in the dining room, all us cullud folks eat in the kitchen, allus a plenty, which is more than we has now. Times was good then, I members back to it sometimes now, when I is glad jes' to get a piece of bread.

We would go out huntin' and ketch 'coons an' possums. Coons was good an' fat in the summer time, but possums not till fall. (Here a modern colored miss, seated on the porch, with her too sophisticated little brother, turned up her nose, and the boy laughed loudly. When I looked up, the girl said, "We don't eat coons, or possums either now.") We would put 'em on and boil 'em with lots of red pepper, an' then bake in a big oven or barbecue pit. But we had plenty of sheeps, and kids and shoats to barbecue too, an' plenty of flour and molasses an' taters to eat with them. I 'members it jes' as well. We tried to foller this up atter the s'render, but somehow --- here Aunt Mandy didn't know just what to say and her voice trailed off.

We had good loom made close, checks an' stripes. My mistis used to weave, an' I had to get down on the floor an' pick up her "sheckle" when she dropped it. My grandmother an' my mamy used to weave too, and help make all our close.

My mammy often told me how she was married right in the white folkses house, they dressed her up for it. Her mistis made her a suit of close on her loom. They was white and she said her dress was low necked an' short-sleeved. She was married by my marster's white preacher, I can't 'member his name now.

Yes, chile, we had Sunday close. Once I 'member my daddy bought my mammy a beautiful blue dress, an' paid \$7.00 for it. Yes, he had ample money. Marse Stewart let him make cotton baskets at night and paid him good money for 'em. But atter the S'render we had a lot of money that wasn't no good, an' so had ole Miss, a big pile so high. The gol' was good, but they said the bluebacks was outa date.

Marster an' Miss was 'ligious folks - all us cullud folks went to their church with them. It was a Baptis' church an' my daddy an' mammy jined an' was baptized. Ole Miss had the bigges' Bible, it had all our names in it, an' when each one of us was bawnd. She used to call us in an' read it to us. I didn' jine church myself until after the s'render, when I was 16.

Before Marse Stewart bought my daddy, he b'longed to Judge Clark, an' he worked buildin' the Mobile Railroad. (She could not further identify the road) He didn' get no pay for that because he was a slave then.

My marster had an overseer, ole Mr. Tankser. He used to whip 'em for runnin' off an' stealin' an' sich. They had their han's tied together in front of them, an' was stript to the wais'. I was jes' a chile, but I used to cry when they whipt 'em, it was mos'ly my two uncles that was whipt. They was bad boys an' would run off ever chac't they got. One of 'em run off so often that they chained him inside a corncrib. I peeked through the cracks an' seen him there. How well does I 'member it all. Marse sold him off because he run away so much.

Yes, the cullud folks had all kind of frolics, dances an' corn huskin's, but I was never 'lowed to go to none of 'em. My daddy an' mammy brought us up in the fear of the Lawd, an' they didn' believe in no sich. Ever night we said our prayers at my daddy's knee, "Our Father which art in Heaven" that's what we said, the Lord's prayer.

Then too, though our marster was 'ligious, not only did we get plenty some t'in t' eat, but each one got so much whiskey each week. Did they ever get enough to get drunk? Yes, sometimes. I 'members two

men's gettin' drunk once and got to fightin'. Overseer he made 'em quit an' shake hands and git back to work.

None of us lef' Marse Stewart atter the S'render, but stayed on as long as he an' ole Miss lived. Atter he was free, my daddy was hired by the year.

I never did learn to read much. I went to school atter the S'render, when I was about 13 years old. My teacher was a bright mulatto young man. They said he got his learnin' in a school taught in a cave durin' slavery days, un be knownst to the white folks. But I was so skeered of him I couldn't learn nothin', he whipped us all so hard.

I was married at 18, an' it was not until I was grown that I learned to wash an' iron. We made lye soap then, with wood ashes, jes' like we did in slave times. There ain't no sich soap now - talk about this bar soap we has now - it was when we had that good lye soap that we had the white close.

What did we sing? I jes' can't member what the himes I ain' never seen no ghos'. I've tried to see 'em, but I never could, an' I was skeered I would see one. People said they was the sperrits of the dead. I had a cousin, born with a veil on his face, he could see ghostes all the time, specially on dark, wet nights.

No chile, I has heered of hoodoos, but I don' believe in 'em. I ain' skeered of any sich. We wasn't raised to be skeered of 'em at our place. When any of us was sick, our white folkses doctor come an' looked atter us.

We used some kin' of yarbs to make medicin' but now I has done forgot what the yarbs was, but it was good medicin.

My ole man an' all my chilluns is dead, less'n its two sons. One was in Chicago, but I ain' heered from him for so long, he may be dead too. One is here in Lyman, but he can hardly keep hisself.

Yes I think the cullud folkses was better off in slavery times, we had plenty t' eat and wear, which we ain' now. We was taught to do right them days, an' had to do right.

People was particular with their chillun then. Both cullud an' white was much better raised than they is now, an' had to mind their parents.

Atter the S'render, when the niggahs was free an' began to get learnin' an' work for theirselves they got into all kinds of meanness.

Yes, lady, I guess it's all right for these young cullud folks to get schoolin' an' work for their selves, but us ole ones is left alone with no one to keer for us.

No, I don' have enough t' eat or wear, but I is thankful for what I gits, an' all I care for now, is to make it to my home in Heaven. I pray the Lawd to keep me faithful to get there. I has no one here, but now I is lookin' to Marse Jesus to keer for me.

MANDY JONES. Second Interview.

Miss, I has been pickin' cotton fer some white folks, - I doan know what deir names is, but dey has a big farm - dey comes in here to Lyman wid a big truck an' carries a lot of us out to de fiel'. Dey say, Mandy, you mighty ole to pick cotton, but Miss, I jes' has to do something to makes me a little money. Dey only gives me \$3.80 a month 'Sistance an' things is so high, I gives out o' something t' eat, an' jes' has to git out an' make a little money someway. You sees I ain' got no shoes fitten to wear. It shore do hurt me to pick cotton, too, I is ruptured, here I'll show you dis ole truss I has to wear.

I'm sorry my house ain' straightened up, but I has been workin' dis week, an' ain' had time. Ain' nobody sleeps here but me, I stays alone an' ten's to my own business. Yes, dis is my house. When I come here 12 years ago, I washed an' got de money to buy de lumber. I jes' had to have a place to live, kase I had my mother with me. She was about 90 years old an' lived two years atter I moved here. My son built de house for me.

(Mandy's two room plank cabin was in wild disorder. The walls were partly lined with sections of pasteboard cartons. An ancient iron bed, with home made mattress and dilapidated bedding was in the one room, also an old dresser and two rickety chairs. There was an old monkey stove, in which a fire had just gone out, and on the stove was a smoky granite utensil, filled with rice, freshly cooked in the best Southern style, the grains standing well apart. In the other room was an old kitchen table, tiny cookstove, a cot, an' several cartons of old clothes, looking mostly too ragged for wear, but all clean, probably given her by white folks after they could no longer use them.)

I 'members my gran' mother, her name was Car'line Stewart. She was bawn in No'th Car'lina, but her marster an' missis brought her to Noxubee county, Mississippi when dey moved here. When my granny

walked along de road, all dem Africans say, "What a fine lookin' woman." She had hair down to her shoulders, an' was a yaller woman, dey say she was kin to de Injuns. Her mother, she say, my great gran'-mother was almost pure Injun, dat what make her yaller wid long hair, but her man was an African. Her folks didn' want her to marry him, kase he was so dark, an' dey say if she did, den her chillun would be Africans. Dey had done picked out a free yaller nigger for her, but my great-gran' fell in love wid dis Dave, kase she was allus a great han' to foller de music, an' Dave was a fine fiddler. Dey doan play on de fiddles an' banjos no more like dey used to, since dey has dese new kin's of music. Her name was Tilda, an Dave an' Tilda was my gran's pappy an' mammy.

I 'members what dey done in slave times, I was a chile but I used to set an' lissen to 'em talk. De slaves would run away sometimes, an' hide out in de big woods. Dey would dig pits, an kiver the spot wid bushes an' vines, an' mebbe lay out fer a whole year. An' dey had pit schools in slave days too. Way out in de woods, dey was woods den, an' de slaves would slip out o' de Quarters at night, an go to dese pits, an some niggah dat had some learnin' would have a school. De way de cullud folks would learn to read was from de white chillun. De white chilluns thought a heap of de cullud chilluns, an' when dey come out o' school wid deir books in deir han's, dey take de cullud chilluns, an' slip off somewhere an' learns de cullud chilluns deir lessons, what deir teacher has jes' learned dem. Dere was a yaller slave man named Gunn, an' his young marster taught him so good, dat atter awhile he taught a pit school hisself. Dis Gunn had a boy named Henry, who learned in his daddy's pit school, an' atter de S'render, Henry Gunn had a school for de cullud chilluns. He was my onlies' teacher, but I didn' learn much, I was too big to go to school, 13 years ole, but I had to work in de fiel! We learned firs' de A B C's, den 1-o-g, log, d-o-g, dog, jes' like dat, yo knows how it goes, de Blueback speller. Dey doan have 'em no more, I doan see dese cullud chilluns now, totin' em wid deir books. Henry Gunn an' his father were all yaller, an' his sisters too. I doan no what nation dey was, dey might a been Artesians, dey all come from up de Mobile Rd. I jes' didn' get to go to school much, you see I got to be a big girl right atter de S'render an' had to work in de fiel's.

My gran' says when she was a chile, her white folks came from North Car'lina an' brought deir niggahs wid dem. Dey all rid in big covered wagons, an' would camp at nights, an' put up tents. One time dey camped right close to a big Injun camp. De Injuns was havin' a frolic, an' deir gals was all a' dancin' wid deir pretty long hair a hangin' down deir backs, An' de cullud mens was plum ca'hied away wid dem pretty Injun gals, an' wanted to git in de frolic to dance wid 'em. But de Injun mens wouldn' let de cullud mens dance wid deir gals. Dey let white mens dance wid 'em, but dey didn' like no black mens aroun'. Den one of de cullud mens got mad an' throwed a big rock into de Injun's camp. Den de Injun mens come atter him, but he got away. He hid in a tent under a big pile o' bedclothes. De Injuns rambled all through de tents a lookin' fer him. Dat was when my gran' was comin to Mississippi wid her white folks, but oh, honey, I 'members seein' a heap of Injuns myself. I seen a whole road full of Injuns, jes' droves of 'em. De womens was ridin' on horses an' mules wid deir babies in deir laps and two, three little Injuns a-settin' on behin'. I seen 'em in slave times an' atter I was free, too. Dey was goin' No'th dey say. De Injuns made de pretties' baskets an' would trade 'em for cornmeal. My mother bought some - de Injuns couldn't talk good like we do - dey measure wid deir han's how much meal dey wan' fer a basket.

My great gran' mother had another daughter, Senie, her name was, she was my gran' mother's sister. Senie, she married Will Edmonds, who belonged to white folks named Edmonds - his mother was Milly Edmonds. She was very ole when I 'members her, she was a yaller lady, almost full Injun, but she got tangled up wid de dark folks and married a black man named Dick Emery. Dick was over one hundred years ole when I 'members him, an' he was still a workin'. Millie was a granny woman for both black an' white - my gran' was a granny woman too, she learned to be a good doctor for white an' black. She say when de African nation mix wid de Injuns dey make a strong nation, but de pure black people, dey ain' so strong.

Atter de S'render lots o' de cullud folks change deir names, but some kept deir marster's names. My pappy's marster was named Stewart, but he change his name back to Young, dat was de name of his ole marster in Maryland. His marster sole' him to a speculator when he was ten years ole' - he rid about de country buyin' slaves. De white man took my pappy up behin' him on de horse, an' ca'hied him to a big drove of slaves, where he was ca'hied next to Mississippi an' sole'. My gran' say she has seen slaves put on de block an' bid off. Dey would fix de women's up pretty an' comb deir hair nice. A big, good-looking young slave woman wid a baby in her arms, one dat look like she breed good, would bring twelve, maybe fifteen hundred dollars.

I 'members when our missis used to read de Bible to us, an' she showed us de picter of de bad man, his name was Tom. Tom? don't you mean Judas? No, I means Tom, - doubtin' Thomas, dat was it.

I 'members atter de S'render my pappy worked for his ole marster, an' got a third of de crop, but it wasn't half, de white man get two wagon fuls and de cullud man, one, an' dat ain' half. Atter awhile some of de black folks buy deir own mules, an' rent deir places for so much, an' dey got more.

Atter de S'render de cullud folks was 'vided into two parts, de Democrats and de Radicals. De Democrats was on de white side, an' de Radicals on de Yankee side. My father voted his firs' vote on de Radical side, but he seen dey done so bad, he changed back to de Democrats.

I firs' married a Dupre, an' all my six chillun was by him. Den I married George Jones, he was allus a Democrat. He was in de War wid his young marster. When his young marster was shot, he run an' picked him up an' hel' him in his arms till he died. He took his gol' watch out of his pocket an' carried it home to de mistis. George got to be a pension man, he got a pension de firs' year atter me an' him married. I was wid him ten years, an' he got the pension as long as he lived. He has been dead 20 years, he died when dey was firs' fixin' out for dis las' War. I never did get no pension, I didn' know how to write for it. My ole marster's son, up in Noxubee county, sent me word, "Mandy, I has your papers all fixed for you to get a pension". Den he died right away, an' I ain' never heard from it sence. But I sure wishes I could git it.

I married ole man George in Starkville, we got a license, it was George Jones to Mandy Dupre, but I cain' member what year it was, I think it was about 40 years ago.

(Well, Mandy, I have enjoyed hearing you talk. See, if you can think of some more things your grandmother told you, and I will come again.)

Yes, miss I sure will, I loves to have you come.

Interviewer's Note:

Mandy Jones is an aged colored woman who lives all alone in a dilapidated shack at Lyman, Miss. This cabin is in the small negro quarters in the central part of town, just west of U.S. 49 and near the negro church. She is about 5 ft. 5 in. in height and weighs 120 lbs. She can wait on herself and stir about her cabin, but no longer can work for white folks. She has only one known living child, a son who lives in Lyman "but he can't keer for hisself" and is on WPA. She receives Old Age Assistance in about the sum of \$4.00, which is insufficient to provide her sufficient food and clothes and adequate shelter