

EXPLORING LONGEVITY AMONG VETERANS IN RURAL BLACK CEMETERIES IN NORTHERN LOUISIANA

Social Research Club- In Training

Poster Presentation



Advisors: Dr. Frances Staten and Professor Clarence Williams

Contributors: Annette Johnson, Kahdejah Holden, Latravia Jackson, Jordan Wynn, Fermin Thomas, Briston Ben, Paul Lloyd, Berndette Henry, Oluwaseun Adedewe, Wasiu B. Onaade, Kahdejah Holden, Cynthia Jackson, JaQuon Williams, Millie Edwards, Amanda Jean Jacques, LaDetra Hackney

Research Assistants: Kern Desir, Barry Calahan, Darrell Specks, Jarrell Specks

ABSTRACT

Using tombstones , monuments, and grave markers, the first phase of this exploratory study investigates the longevity among veterans born in the late 1800s and the early twentieth century who are buried in rural black cemeteries in a academic community in northern Louisiana. The second phase will compare longevity findings from the rural black academic community with findings from a non-rural academic community- specifically- rural farm/plantation. The third phase will be a racial comparison using rural-white cemeteries. An attempt will be made toward an understanding and explanation of the findings of the study.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Did veterans born in the late 1800s, 1900s, 1920s, 1940s, and other decades live beyond their life expectancy?
- Did the studied veterans live to be senior saints, pre-centenarians, centenarians, and super centenarians?
- Does race differences exist in living beyond or within the predicted life expectancy?

RELEVANT BACKGROUND

- ◆ Studies have shown that in the late 1800's life expectancy was short. Majority of the male species lived up to 40 years, while women lived up to 50 years during the 1800's.
- ◆ However, in the early 20th century the life expectancy rate was around 50 years old and today its around 77-81 years of age.
- ◆ Studies have also shown lifetime earnings to be associated with longevity (Gaudecker & Scholz 2006).
- ◆ Changes in pension laws have been documented to have a significant effect on life expectancy. For example, life expectancy for veterans who received old-aged pensions increased by .5 years and 2.7 years (Salm 2007).
- ◆ Salm (2007) found that the effect of veteran pensions on longevity was large across wealth groups and the size of the city.

Defining Longevity

- Longevity is defined as long life; it is sometimes used as a synonym for life expectancy

For the purpose of this study, four longevity groups are identified .

- Senior Saint has lived to be 70 years or more.
- Pre-Centenarian has lived to be 90-99.
- Centenarian has lived to the age of 100 years or more.
- Super- Centenarian has lived to be the age of 110 or more.

Methods

- ◆ Students at Grambling in training for the social research club were instructed to gather data from tombstones pertaining to the date of death and birth of veterans born in the late 1800s to present time.
- ◆ Other relevant information on the tombstones was also obtained.
- ◆ Ethnographic research tools included: Notebooks, pencils, cameras, pocket cameras, cell phones, and digital cameras.
- ◆ Informants /key consultants were used to provide information about some veterans buried in the cemeteries of focus.

Preliminary Findings

Table 1: Veterans born in the 1800s

NAME	DOB	DOD	AGE AT DEATH
Milas Baity	March 1892	Nov. 8 1973	81
Billie Adams	May 14, 1892	Sept. 18 1985	93
Jeff Nicholson	Oct. 11 1892	Oct. 30 1966	74
Elijah Cornewell	July 15, 1893	Aug. 19 1977	84
Jim Reynolds	April 21, 1894	Aug. 16, 1971	77
John Brim	Unknown	1896	Unknown

Preliminary Findings

Table 2: Veterans born 1904 – 1919

NAME	DOB	DOD	AGE AT DEATH
Ben Davis	April, 24 1904	June 7, 1986	82
Same Roone	Nov. 26, 1909	Jan.,. 4, 1981	72
Lynel Holmes	Unknown 1918	Unknown 1991	73
Alfred Jones	July 2, 1918	June 13,1986	68
Conrad Huntchinson	Oct. 25, 1919	Mar. 5, 1996	77
Rhone Herman	Unknown 1919	Unknown 1993	74
Gus D. Garner	June 8, 1918	Sept. 1949	31

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

NAME	DOB	DOD	AGE AT DEATH
Albert Jackson	Jan. 20, 1920	July 5, 1990	70
Percy Giles	April 25, 1921	July 26, 1991	70
John Brooks	Jan 20, 1921	Dec. 16 1971	50
Earl Harris	April 12, 1921	May 18, 2000	79
Clayton Wiley	March 16, 1921	May 3, 1991	70
Edward Ford	Jan. 19, 1922	Oct. 5, 1991	69
Claude Sims	Oct. 19, 1924	Nov. 15, 1977	53
Oliver Billups	Dec. 5, 1924	April 19, 2002	78
Ornell Green	Aug. 24, 1924	Feb, 2, 1976	52
Oscar Reed	Oct, 25, 1925	Jan., 4, 2001	76
Charles Shyne	May 15, 1925	Nov. 7, 2001	76
Velma Sims	April 10, 1926	Aug. 23, 1999	73
Arbra Butler	Feb. 13, 1926	July 25, 2012	86
David James	Sept, 7, 1927	Mar. 12, 2009	82
Robert Bridges	Oct. 15, 1928	May 13, 2010	82
Billy Bissic	Sept. 25, 1929	Dec. 1, 2007	78
Ulyses Andrus	Unknown 1929	Unknown 1992	63

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

TABLE 4: VETERANS BORN IN THE 1930s- 1940s

NAME	DOB	DOD	AGE AT DEATH
Felton Thomas Newell	May 13 1932	Oct. 14, 2004	72
Earl Shyne	Oct. 6, 1932	July 30 1987	55
Jodie Shelton	June 21, 1934	Aug. 30, 2003	69
Willie Richard Willis	Nov. 22 1935	Feb. 1 2000	65
Louis J Rhone J	Sept. 10, 1936	Feb. 12, 1974	38
Arbrah Ford	Mar. 30, 1941	Sept. 6, 2005	64
Robert Giles	Sept. 18, 1942	Oct. 4, 1998	56
Nnie Thelman Jr.*	Mar. 1, 1944	June 22, 1996	52

NAME	DOB	DOD	AGE AT DEATH
George Faison	Dec. 5, 1892	Aug.4, 1966	74
Arthur Ludley	Jan. 27, 1893	Jan. 29, 1951	58
John W. Abner	April 7, 1894	Jan. 11, 1961	67
Mamon Smith	Jan. 15, 1895	Jan. 21, 1960	65
Luther Washington	Sept. 1896	Aug. 7, 1963	67
Earnest Giles	Nov. 27, 1897	Feb. 27, 1974	77
Norman Jackson	Dec. 23, 1907	Feb. 27, 1974	67
Albert H. Lewis	Dec. 23, 1907	Feb 27, 1979	70
Glaude Fowler	Dec. 13, 1907	May 15, 1949	42
Acie Jenson	Aug. 3, 1911	Oct. 15, 1980	69
Fred Williams	May 24, 1913	June 2, 1975	62
Shelyey L. Ford	Oct. 14, 1920	Sept. 7, 1975	55
Talmadge C. Gorce	Sept. 30, 1921	April 25, 1947	26
Lonnie Harrison	Dec. 5, 1925	Aug. 31, 1994	69
Chrisitian E. Williams	Dec. 23, 1925	Jan. 15, 1994	69
LaMarr Garr	June 3, 1926	Sept. 4, 1966	90
Willie G. Delme	July 9, 1933	Oct. 31, 1960	27

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

- ❖ The Veterans in our research lived beyond what was considered the life expectancy during their time.
- ❖ The life expectancy for black Veterans who were born in the early 1900's, were expected to die around their early 30's through their late 40's.
- ❖ For example, in Table I, their life expectancy was 42 years and Table II, life expectancy was 46 years through 53 years.

FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE RESEARCH

- Racial comparison of data from select exclusive white and black cemeteries for veterans buried in rural settings is still in progress.
- Interpretation of the findings from the rural black and white cemeteries.
- Inclusion of additional rural and non-rural cemeteries.

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