



## Fred Joseph

**FRED JOSEPH** was born in Louisville, Kentucky in 1943. Fred was raised in a Reform Jewish household, members of the Adath Israel congregation. His family went to synagogue on high holidays and he reluctantly attended Sunday school. He did not celebrate his bar mitzvah. The family lived in a mostly Christian community where he experienced Christian influences in school, albeit in a fairly accepting environment.

*Whenever there was a holiday, I would be asked to come to the front of the class and [they would] say, we have someone Jewish in the class, "explain this"*

Fred says that open experience changed when he went to Atherton High School. Fred recalls several anti-Semitic experiences during this time, such as when he went to the Louisville Country Club's pool with a friend and the lifeguard blew the whistle and told everyone to get out because there was a Jew in the pool. The friend's family was asked not to bring Fred back if they wanted to continue to be members of the country club. As a result, the family withdrew from the country club.

*One was very clear at that time that Jews were not accepted at several of the country clubs... and some of the social clubs... downtown.*

When it came time for Fred to choose a college, he made sure to choose a school and a fraternity that welcomed men of different races and religions. His fraternity at Wesleyan University took turns making a blessing from their respective traditions at the meal, and he delighted in the ecumenical nature of this. After law school, Fred accepted a job in the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) in 1967, the unit responsible for President Lyndon B. Johnson's war on poverty. Fred worked in the community action section of the OEO which initiated programs such as Head Start, legal services, foster grandparents and a variety of manpower programs.

When Fred returned to Louisville in 1973, he continued his work with social justice and civil rights issues. He served as chairman of the Legal Aid Society, which was the lead counsel for the plaintiffs in the litigation surrounding the racial integration of Jefferson County Public Schools.

