

Mr. James Mathews On Employment



Quote 1

"I lived with my aunt and uncle; their names were Hope Matthews and Kenneth Matthews. My uncle was an electrician, and he had problems getting electrical jobs until he finally had to go to work for C.H. Robinson, which is a paper company."

Quote 2

"...I guess, you know, life is a challenge. Coming up as a child, you know, we had a problem with a lack of finance. My uncle acted as my father. He was held back financially because he had the skills of an electrician, but he wasn't able to use them. And so I believe that that would be a challenge; you know. We were held back from being financially able to fund our needs on his standpoint."

James Mathews was born at Maine General Hospital in Portland, Maine, in 1941. He had four siblings; his father, Oscar Mathews, Jr., was a cook for the railroad that ran between Portland and Boston, and his mother, Llewena Hill Mathews, was one of the first graduates of the Gorham Normal School. His father's family emigrated from Nova Scotia. As a child, he lived with his aunt and uncle in South Portland; the family moved to another home in South Portland when the state took their home to build I-295. Mathews graduated from Portland High School in 1960, and graduated from Southern Maine Vocational Technical Institute with an associate's degree in electronics. He worked for AT&T for thirty seven years. He married Lorene Mathews and had five children. At the time of the interview, he had been a member of the NAACP for thirty five years, serving as the president in the early 1970s, and was an active member of the Green Memorial AME Zion Church. He discusses raising children, family traditions, and what makes the Portland African American community special.

You can listen to the full interview and read a transcript at

https://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/aa_hiwimi/4/