

**ORAL HISTORY T-0344
INTERVIEW WITH DR. ORA LEE MALONE
INTERVIEWED BY BILL MORRISON
BLACK COMMUNITY LEADERS PROJECT
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MORRISON: When did you move to St. Louis?

MALONE: In 1951.

MORRISON: What was it like living in Alabama when you grew up?

MALONE: Well, in living in Alabama...well, a lot of things you didn't know about. Buses was segregated. Everything was segregated. Every candidate ran his campaign based on separation of the races...white supremacy. Huge billboards that you would see going to school in the morning...white supremacy billboards. That was the campaign slogan of all [break in conversation] Then the buses were segregated, and we would be passed up a lot, because black kids didn't have any special buses to ride to go to school. They would pass you up...the buses would pass you up, because they just thought, you know, there was nothing wrong with colored to sit there. Everybody was called that.

MORRISON: Where's that?

MALONE: That was in Mobile, Alabama.

MORRISON: Mobile?

MALONE: Yes.

MORRISON: Were your parents from there, too?

MALONE: Yes, my parents was originally from Mississippi, and I was actually born in Mississippi, but we moved to Alabama.

MORRISON: How many brother and sisters?

MALONE: There was nine brothers and sisters. I have nine brothers and sisters...three sisters and six brothers.

MORRISON: So, you went to school in Alabama?

MALONE: Yes, I have brothers still in Alabama. One teaches chemistry, one is a surgeon, and one is in the Merchant Marine.

MORRISON: Did you work when you were going to school?

MALONE: Yes, I worked while I was going to school. My first job was working in a restaurant. I worked in private homes in Alabama. Working wasn't too much of a problem, because it was during the war and everybody was hard up for somebody to work for them. The pay wasn't much, but I mean you could get jobs. It wasn't the problem.

MORRISON: You could get jobs?

MALONE: Yes, you could get jobs. You had no problem, because it was during the war, and Mobile being a seaport town, it was scraping the barrel. Then you had a great influx of people move in at that particular 1944-45 time from the rural areas of Alabama and Mississippi to get jobs in the shipyards. And they had a riot down there...the first riot. The riot was at the shipyard.

MORRISON: What year was that?

MALONE: That was probably around...maybe...1944 or '45. But they did have a riot there, and the riot was because they brought in the first batch of black welders from Tuskegee, Alabama, to weld in the shipyard; they was running that short of welders. They were trained at Tuskegee and they brought them in...and the white men objected...because when you go down in the hold of a ship...I don't know whether you've been down in the hold of a ship or not...you go down, and you're in close contact because the women only held the lamps and the men did the welding. You would hold the light, and they didn't want that close contact with white women and black men. So, we had this terrible riot down there. There wasn't anybody actually hurt too bad, but they brought in troops. That was my first experience with troops.

MORRISON: You were there then...when it happened?

MALONE: Yes, I wasn't working at the shipyard, but I was in town when it happened...I was downtown...when it happened.

MORRISON: What was it like when you found out about it?

MALONE: Well, it was confined mostly in the shipyard area. People was mad about it, because a lot of blacks had gone off to war and a lot of them had been killed. I had a cousin killed in Africa...in the African invasion. And a lot of them felt that this is the wrong this for us to do...and parents were mad...I can remember that morning... one black fellow was on his way to work and he got off the bus and said, "I'm not going to work at the shipyard anymore, because I can't win this war by myself." He says to me, "I'm doing my job and then I'm being beaten up about it at the shipyard...about a stupid thing like welders coming in from Tuskegee." And they was topnotch welders, because they had had actual training in welding...they had to be to get the job as welders. That was the main cause of the riot. I can remember the troops. They had troops lined up all the way from the Alabama dry dock shipyard all the way to Chickasaw Terrace. It was a long way, you know, with the bayonets and the whole thing, and they was pushing people around with the bayonets. The troops didn't play; they meant business. They didn't take sides; they broke it up immediately, and there was

never anymore trouble like that down there.

MORRISON: What was the result of the riot? Did they have to leave the ship then?

MALONE: No, no...no, no...they said they was going to keep them there; they had to have them. The government said that they had to stay there. They kept them there, and they continued welding, and then they started hiring welders after that. It was common practice to have black welders at the shipyard. Start picking them up like they was picking up the white welders; they didn't have to have all this Tuskegee training. They picked them up and brought them in and they worked there. A lot of them is still working there at the shipyards, but it's been quite a change there, now.

MORRISON: Have you been back there?

MALONE: Yes, I was there in December of last year. You wouldn't recognize it being the same place.

MORRISON: Attitudes have changed?

MALONE: Yes, attitudes have changed so. Even the politicians has changed, because there was voter registration that was the main thing. Blacks couldn't register to vote. I remember my first involvement in voter registration was not voter registration, but trying to get the right to vote...because every time anybody tried to vote, you had all these obstacles like...the state legislature was constantly passing amendments trying to amend the Constitution or mending the Constitution. I remember this amendment... the one that I was involved in...was called the Boswell Amendment...when the state representative decided that it was named after him...called the Boswell Amendment.., that is...black, if you wanted to register, you had to interpret the Constitution to the satisfaction of the registrar.

MORRISON: That was only for blacks? Not for white people?

MALONE: Well, it was supposed to be for everybody, but it wasn't...because the registrars turned down people who had voted back east and was professors at Tuskegee Institute...because the catch was, you could memorize the whole Constitution, but if they asked you something and your interpretation didn't satisfy the registrar...who was probably an eighth grade dropout...you was turned down.

MORRISON: How long did that last?

MALONE: That lasted till, maybe, about 1948 or '49. Somewhere along there we met, and I remember this old man had been shot in the back because he tried to vote.

MORRISON: Shot? In the back?

MALONE: Yes, and he couldn't even get a job. I can't even remember his name, but he had on some real tattered clothes. Bill Mosley [sounds like] and myself were the only two young people who attended the meeting, and they couldn't hardly write. They were really old men, they were black men; they were trying to get the right to vote. We was trying to help them...trying to get some briefs prepared for the lawyers to take to Supreme Court. The

Supreme Court rules the Boswell Amendment unconstitutional.

MORRISON: And that was in '49?

MALONE: That was around '49.

MORRISON: You still took types of tests?

MALONE: Yes, the thing that really cleared it out was the Voting Rights Act of '65.

MORRISON: So, we're up to 1965?

MALONE: All the way up to '65, you had these problems.

MORRISON: Did you go to high school down in Alabama?

MALONE: Yes, I went to high school down there, and I went to one summer school there. I spent most of my time in private schools; I would always go back to Mississippi to go to school. Most of my time was spent in school in Mississippi. I would go back and stay with my grandparents. They lived on a farm, and my grandfather used to take the shucks from the corn cobs and braid collars for the people to put on the mules to farm. He would do that all during the night; he would break these corn shucks, then he would take this wood, big logs and split them up and he would strip it and make baskets that they put the cotton in.

MORRISON: You helped him do that, then?

MALONE: No, I just watched him; I didn't dare help...just watched! They paid so little, but at least he had a little change coming in.

MALONE: Was Mississippi better than Alabama?

MALONE: No, Mississippi was even worse, because the dimensions was just opened. See, Mobile is unlike the rest of Alabama...being a seaport town; it wasn't as bad as Birmingham and Montgomery.

MORRISON: There was more work to do?

MALONE: There was more jobs. That was the main thing. Always had jobs there, because you have all the paper mills there. Being a very rich county, the school system was much better there...because there, you don't have like here. You don't have the school districts, you have a school district...Mobile's City School District...and everybody gets the same money.

MORRISON: Why did you go to Mississippi, then? To help your grandfather?

MALONE: Well, I just was there with my grandparents.

MORRISON: Did your brothers and sisters go?

MALONE: No, no...no, they stayed in Alabama. Most of my time was just visiting there, and I was crazy about my grandmother. I'd just stay with them and spend as much time with them

as I possibly could...but I went to junior college in Alabama one summer.

MORRISON: Did you like that?

MALONE: Well, I liked it...but being nine of us and me being the oldest, they couldn't afford to send me to college.

MORRISON: Was it as expensive as it is today?

MALONE: It was worse than it is today...because now. In Mobile, Alabama all the kids can go to college because it's right there. Junior colleges are all over the place. That's one thing Wallace was able to do...give Alabama good roads and junior colleges. He was able to do a lot for education in Alabama...equalized teachers' pay...

MORRISON: What do most blacks think of Wallace down in Alabama?

MALONE: They don't like him. They give him credit for what he has been able to do. They say one thing about Wallace...he gave teachers equalized pay, and he gave us good roads.

MORRISON: Schools?

MALONE: Yes, real good schools, but the tax base is really high.

MALONE: What is the ratio of black people to white people in Alabama, do you know?

MALONE: In Mobile?

MORRISON: Well...in Mobile?

MALONE: Maybe 20% blacks in Mobile.

MORRISON: That's why people like Wallace keep getting voted back into office?

MALONE: Not necessarily. Wallace has had problems with Mobile. Even the papers in Mobile. Wallace's strength is out-state Alabama. Small towns and rural areas in Alabama.

MORRISON: Not in the big cities?

MALONE: No, not in the big cities. I don't know how he stands in Birmingham and Montgomery, but even the press didn't especially take kindly to him in Mobile. No, he had problems there.

MORRISON: How did you happen to move to St. Louis in 1951?

MALONE: My father worked at the American steel foundry in St. Louis 1951 for years and years.

MORRISON: In East St. Louis?

MALONE: In East St. Louis...when the pay was only \$15 a week. He came back and we

moved to Alabama and then we went to [can't hear], and he moved from St. Louis, and we went to Alabama. I guess that was in what they called the depression, or whatever it was. Then he started working on the railroads...which paid absolutely nothing.

MOSRISON: In Alabama?

MALONE: In Alabama. Blacks did that at that particular time. Then after he worked at the railroad, he had some problem with the railroad supervisor, because they didn't belong to the union. The part my father worked in...and he got fired...

MORRISON: [can't hear]

MALONE: It wasn't the union.

MORRISON: There wasn't any?

MALONE: No, the railroads were always reluctant to take in blacks. The problems the pullman porters had years ago. A. Philip Randolph...he had a terrible fight; he wasn't from the union. He was an educator and that was the only way he could organize the pullman porters, so the railroads, even in St. Louis...even when everything else had been desegregated...they were still putting blacks in the basement at the Missouri Pacific Hospital. So, my father got a job with the government, where he finished. He retired working with the government, and that's where he spent most of his time. After we moved from St. Louis. Then we moved back to St. Louis in 1951, because all my mother's people was here. I had two brothers at St. Louis University, three at one time, but one transferred to Morehouse College because he felt they wasn't fair with him on the basketball team. He wasn't doing that much in college, anyway.

MORRISON: That's in Atlanta...Morehouse College?

MALONE: He transferred from St. Louis University to Morehouse College.

MORRISON: In Atlanta?

MALONE: In Atlanta. I had two brothers graduate from Morehouse College. My older brother graduated from Morehouse College, and my youngest brother graduated from Morehouse College. Then I had two brothers graduate from St. Louis University.

MORRISON: Where...were you the youngest? Or the oldest?

MALONE: Me? I am the oldest.

MORRISON: How many relatives were in St. Louis before you came? A lot of them were here for a long time?

MALONE: Yes, a lot of them were here for a long, long time. My mother's people...I have an uncle, my mother's brother...worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad for about 44-45 years. They've been here for a long, long time.

MORRISON: Did you start to work then when you came?

MALONE: Yes, I started working here at the California Manufacturing Company which was a non-union shop on Page Avenue.

MORRISON: How long did you work there?

MALONE: I worked there on Page Avenue about nineteen years.

MORRISON: Did you join the Amalgamated Clothing Workers?

MALONE: I joined the ACW Union about 1956.

MORRISON: What did you do when you first started working there?

MALONE: Working here, I started servicing shops as a business representative. Sol came right out of the shops. I'd start servicing the locals here in St. Louis.

MORRISON: What was your next job here, after that?

MALONE: This was the only one I've had. I haven't had but one job since I've been in St. Louis.

MORRISON: Oh. You're the business representative now?

MALONE: Here, now, yes. This is the only job. I've actually had only two jobs in my whole life.

MORRISON: Do you like it here?

MALONE: Well, you mean, working here...working with the union?

MORRISON: Yes.

MALONE: Yes, I like working for the union.

MORRISON: How big of a union is it?

MALONE: We have about 385-389 thousand people. Since we organized fair, we have 395,000 people. That's a national union, an international union.

MORRISON: Are there a lot of blacks in the union?

MALONE: Yes, you have in St. Louis now. There used to be not that many in...when I came in, there wasn't that many blacks in the union in St. Louis. California Manufacturing had the largest number of blacks, so he was a non-union shop.

MORRISON: Was it hard for you to get the job then since you were black?

MALONE: Not with the California Company that I went with. Not with that company,

because he was always kind of a pioneer, I guess, in that hired blacks. I think he hired his first one in 1949.

MORRISON: How many other blacks have jobs like yours now?

MALONE: In this union? I don't know how many, nationwide.

MORRISON: In St. Louis?

MALONE: I am the only black business rep they have in the St. Louis area that I know of.

MORRISON: What does your job involve?

MALONE: It involves solving petty grievances in the shop. If they have a problem...some of them over the phone...they haven't been ringing this morning, but this is Friday and usually not too bad. They either call you all day about some problems and you have to go and check them out and settle grievances between management and...but being in an older union and old shop, they know what their rights are. They have a terrible shortage of machine operators, so the companies are nice to the operators. Extremely nice in most cases.

MORRISON: Why is there a shortage?

MALONE: People are just not going into that work anymore. Most of that work was brought here...the skills was brought here. Now, you can bring the Koreans over, and they have a lot of experience in sewing; or, you can bring the Japanese over, they have a lot of experience in sewing. It's born with them. But in America, most all the women want to be secretaries or something else. They never think about these jobs, and some of them really pay well. We have women sewing in our shops, some of them make as high as eight dollars an hour.

MORRISON: Really? Boy, I'd try for that...if no one else will!

MALONE: No, that's not a bad salary. Now, all of them don't make that; it's a piece-work operation.

MORRISON: What do you start out with?

MALONE: We have different starting salaries in different shops. It depends on what you're doing. Most of them start...they get this training...the companies train them, and then they make on their own. What you get...you make what you make...is what you get. I had a man told me yesterday he needed 20 operators, and he's got to have 20, and nowhere to find them. You can't find them. They just don't have them.

MORRISON: Are they all females?

MALONE: Most of them...used to be mostly men.

MORRISON: They do the actual sewing?

MALONE: They make the jackets; it's men's clothing. They make jackets like the jacket you

have on. We have some put the emblems on. Everybody has his own little operation...his own section. Your collar-makers would do only the collars.

MORRISON: I see. Some would just make sleeves...

MALONE: Your cuffs would make only the cuff, your sleeve-makers would do the sleeves, and your person who is putting on the facings would do just facings. Then you have to have your outer sewing, your stitches, and everybody has his own little operation. So, that way it's easier to have to do the whole garment.

MORRISON: It's like an assembly line?

MALONE: It's like an assembly line. You do your thing; that's all you have to do. Just yours and nothing else.

MORRISON: Then it just goes down the line?

MALONE: No, it's moved from section to section in some places with the truck. When the outer sewing is finished, the bong girls...you have bong girls. It comes off the cutting tables...the cutting tables is huge tables and they have this huge light run by electricity now; they're talking about doing it with laser beams. If it's being used a lot, it's going to throw a lot of our people out of work if they ever do.

MORRISON: These laser beams? Why would that be?

MALONE: Because you can cut all the coats in a minute or two. It takes these cutters...

MORRISON: Oh, you mean, use laser beams to actually cut these...

MALONE: To actually cut...

MORRISON: And make the collars...

MALONE: No make the cutters.

MORRISON: I see, you have people that just cut? That's all?

MALONE: Just cut...the cutters. The cutters used to be all men, but the women are moving in that field now...which is good.

MORRISON: Is that very dangerous?

MALONE: No...that's probably one of the easiest jobs there is, because the only thing you have to do is get this thing up there and move it to where he wants to and cut it. Push a button and the knife comes down and cuts it. Anybody could do it.

MORRISON: Getting back to Alabama now, were you involved in politics at all then?

MALONE: I was not exactly involved in politics, because I wasn't voting. My only political

involvement was fighting for the right to vote. That's all we was doing...fighting for the right to vote. That's why in 1965, when I went to Washington to lobby for the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Then when they tried to eliminate it in 1970, I went back to Washington, and we was able to save it.

MORRISON: They tried to eliminate it?

MALONE: They passed it, but it was only for five years. I sent Congressman Clay a letter about it and told him that it was going to be eliminated; they was going to phase it out. See, a lot of these acts was passed just for a short time...kind of a piecey thing...before you know it, it's all gone. Like the one they just phased out...the pattern and practice suits that the justice department could bring in the EEOC. That went down the drain, too, just recently. Nobody really realized it happened. I sent a letter to Mrs. Sullivan about it, and she said nobody had as yet caled it to her attention.

MORRISON: Did she know about it, I wonder?

MALONE: I just don't know. She forwarded the letter to them, and she sent me a copy of their letter and it just died. A lot of things happen if you don't get started in time...you can't get enough people rallied around it in time. Even though we have a bad Justice Department now, it won't always be that way; and just having the weight of the Justice Department on the side of EEOC gives strength to it.

MORRISON: So, you always have to stay active?

MALONE: You have to watch to see, because the Voting Rights Act of '65 was probably one of the greatest acts ever passed that benefited the blacks, but you have to watch them. One by one they will be gone.

MORRISON: So, when did you become active in politics when you came to St. Louis?

MALONE: As soon as I got here. In St. Louis...as soon as I was registered to vote. I think it s very important.

MORRISON: How did you become active? What did you do?

MALONE: In any campaign that was going on that I agreed with that particular person's philosophy, I worked on his campaign.

MORRISON: Were there a lot of other blacks at the time doing the same thing?

MALONE: Then there was a few blacks involved...like there is now...you don't have too many blacks that is really going to get out and hit the streets and go door-to-door, and we're lacking in political education. We really need more political education. I did some things for the project before the last campaign. In the project...not asking them to ballot...just voter education. You can check on how your congressmen vote and how your senators vote. It's very important to know how they vote, and they have to be supervised...because you can't just send these great misguided missiles up to Washington and forget about them. You

wouldn't work as well, if you didn't have supervision; they have to be supervised. You send them to Washington or to downtown and there isn't anything to them, they just don't go work...they don't do anything.

MORRISON: They have to represent you, so they have to know what you think.

MALONE: They have to know what you're thinking. The only way to know what they're doing and to know when they're absent is to check their voting record. So, I took a whole stack of voting records, and I started out with a small group of people in the room, and it just kept getting bigger and bigger, and they just kept on sending out more and more. I hadn't tried doing anything on voter education other than with union members who have some knowledge about it, because we have some really good educational programs for members, but you don't have that unless the blacks come to you needing it. Not too many of them are interested in unions, because they never felt like unions was our thing; they thought that unions fought to keep us out, and we're not here as a result of a union but because a court order said you had to open your doors for me.

MORRISON: Not because they wanted to?

MALONE: Not because you...it was not your goodness that I'm here.

MORRISON: Not because the unions wanted it?

MALONE: Not because the unions said they wanted it, we're here because the court said so. We're working here because the court said you had to hire us...they take that attitude...but it's getting better. It's getting much better. A lot of them are getting involved in unions, and a lot more is getting involved in politics. Because you have to stay on that; it's the main thing that determines...oh, whether or not you have a sidewalk, or not, or streetlights. When you bring it to them like that, they understand it.

MORRISON: So, was it pretty different when you came to St. Louis from Alabama? Did it allow you to be in politics?

MALONE: Other than voting, St. Louis was not different from Alabama, other than voting, and I actually believe that St. Louis is worse than Alabama is now, as far as the attitudes of the people is considered. You have such hidden prejudices in St. Louis that you don't run into in Alabama. You'd never run into such deep-seated hatred between blacks and whites in the South. They never had any...because of the living patterns in the South...you have integrated housing, and they played baseball together, and they knew each other.

MORRISON: Oh...in the South?

MALONE: In the South. You had integrated housing. As Dick Gregory says, "In the South, they don't care how close you get if you don't get too big, and in the North they don't care how big you get, if you don't get too close." (laughter) And that's about the size of it.

MORRISON: So, what was the problem then? There was no deep hatred, and it was integrated...

MALONE: You had laws that kept people apart. It was the law that did it; it was the politicians that did it. It's just like Talmadge in Georgia, you wouldn't know anything about Talmadge in Georgia.

MORRISON: Talmadge...wasn't he on the Watergate Committee?

MALONE: No. No, this is his son. This is the son of the old man, Talmadge...he was governor of Georgia for years, and he used to go around and campaign and talk about blacks...Talmadge and Billbo...how to keep them in their place. And Billbo campaigned

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MALONE: Lt. Governor...and when old Governor Talmadge died, his son, William Talmadge took over the governor's chair from the Lt. Governor. He and his storm-troopers went in and threw the Lt. Governor out. He had no claim to it whatsoever, but they had not law...no guidelines... then...as to who would assume the governor's chair, really. And the courts declared that the lieutenant governor would take over if he... the governor died.

MORRISON: And then how long was he in there? About a month or so?

MALONE: About a month or so, he was governor until the courts ruled him out. Then he became senator.

MORRISON: Then people must like him.

MALONE: Well, when blacks got the vote, Talmadge changed his attitude altogether. Did you see that program on the new voices of the South and the old voices of the South moving north? Under the guise of law and order.

MORRISON: So, he changed?

MALONE: He changed altogether, because he couldn't get elected in Georgia if he hadn't changed. Once the blacks got to vote, he changed himself altogether. You go down there now...I'm going down to do some work in a campaign if I have the opportunity,... for Langman...he came out of the Army; he was a mayor of Mobile for awhile. He was elected mayor a long time ago before it was popular to speak out against racism. He said that when he rode the city bus line in Mobile, he felt like he was riding in Hitler's Germany.

MORRISON: Is that what he said?

MALONE: Yes, he said that before it was popular to say anything. Eventually he got to be mayor of Georgia...I mean, Alabama...but he lost; his son is now running there for state rep. I have a brother there who is working in his campaign, and he says he wishes I was there to do some work in his campaign. If I get an opportunity one weekend, I am going to pinpoint some key precincts and do a little work in his campaign, because he really deserves to win.

MORRISON: What other organizations are you in?

MALONE: I belong to the Women's Political Caucus, and I belong to the Phillip Randolph

Institute. I was elected to the National Policy Council of the Women's Political Caucus.

MORRISON: How long have you been in that?

MALONE: Since its inception when Bella Abzug came and formed the Political Caucus...and I joined it then.

MORRISON: That's the national one?

MALONE: That's the national organization.

MORRISON: How many people in St. Louis are in your organization?

MALONE: Well, we had one time about 700 members. I don't know how many we have now.

MORRISON: Do they have monthly meetings?

MALONE: They have two meetings a month. You have the Policy Council meeting and then you have the regular membership meeting. Twice a month. I belong to and I organized in St. Louis, the A. Phillip Randolph Institute...in St. Louis. That's kind of a black wing of the... They do voter registration and voter education in black neighborhoods. They have a convention in May, the 17th. The theme of the convention is, "Beyond the veto." Last year, the theme of the convention was the "Union Card in the Ballot Box." And this year's is, "Beyond the veto." They want to elect a veto-proof congress.

MORRISON: Do you belong to the NAACP?

MALONE: I belong to the NAACP, but I'm not active. I'm an actual dues paying member of NAACP, and I work for the Legal Defense Fund of the NAACP, because I've never been too active in NAACP. I worked mostly with the Institute and I work with a group called ROW...a group on welfare organization in St. Louis. We're trying to get welfare, and I work with the Mother-to-Mother Program. Do you know about the Mother-to-Mother Program? Well, that's a program set up the night Dr. Martin Luther King was murdered. We're setting up this program that the Christian Board of Publication...and that program was headed by a fellow that just passed, named Norman Ellinger. And what they would do, a black mother in the county and a black mother in the city would just meet and get together and they would just help each other out. And some of the families in the county really took on bad families; families that had terrible situations, because one man in the county said that he was assigned to work with a family that this man was a two or three times loser...he had been to prison two or three times. So, when he first went there, he had never had this type of experience before he had never had anything like this. And he says that he was really shook up, but he got courage enough and went back, and him and his wife did go back. And he said every time, he could never get to talk with this man and his wife together, because one or the other had left home. She was either gone or he was gone, and they were separated and finally he got them together, and he talked with them and he found out the problem...one of the problems...was that he couldn't get a job, and she was working at a tavern, and she was working at night and they was always into it, arguing. And he first said he got her a job at

Famous, so she worked out really well; and then, he got him a job, and after they got to know each other, he was able to help him. Because he'd tell him, "You'd better not quit this job until you know you can get another one." And that's the program that we worked with. We worked...I found here...and during that particular time, I went to the post office one afternoon, and found an old lady out in front of Union Station who couldn't get a cab and her feet were swollen like this...she was just standing there and the cabs wouldn't pick her up.

MORRISON: Why not?

MALONE: The cabs at that particular time...if they didn't think you'd tip them...they wouldn't pick you up...and they figured she didn't have any money, from her looks...and she didn't.

MORRISON: In front of Union Station?

MALONE: Down at Union Station. What had happened, she had lived in St. Louis...now this is one of the things that happens... she had lived in St. Louis for a few months, and she went back to Mississippi to get her daughter who had eight children. And she was bringing her daughter back and the Welfare Department in Mississippi had given her a ticket and nothing else. A ticket to come to St. Louis, and they didn't have anything else. A ticket to come to St. Louis...just sent them here. And nobody read! That was the sad part about it, and the Welfare Department in Mississippi took the address that the old lady had and by not being able to read, nobody copied it down...so, she was there and didn't know. So, she was there and didn't know the address, so I got a cab and got in the cab with her to find...she said she lived in this house in St. Louis, not far from Union Station in front of a school and the cab just happened to pick up another man. We rode and tried to find it, and we went to every school in the neighborhood down this way. And finally when she saw the house, she recognized it. And then she had to get this daughter that lived here down to get this daughter. But these are some of the things that happened.

MORRISON: Are most of the cases like that?

MALONE: Multiplied thousands of times over...cases like that. People from Mississippi. And people that lived there. There was no law that says you had to go to school, and most of them lived too far from school to go anyway, because there were no bridges to cross, the ditches that was there, and in the rainy seasons, there was no school. There was no way to get to school. So nobody in the school could read and nobody copied the address down. They were just stranded here, and this was really a sad situation...and this happened all over the place. The government is really responsible for that because they didn't need these people. They had used them all these years on the land and they lived off the land...they didn't know about anything else. So, when the government said...it started out parity checks...it was supposed to get small farmers...they'd give you a little check and let the land lay out and plant it then when it started really getting bigger, then the big farmers took all of the land and you couldn't use it for anything. So, the black people who had lived off the land. . .natural resources of the land all their lives... They planted the grass, they grew what they ate and they made their little clothing, so when the government began to subsidize the big farmers, they took all the LAND SO THEY HAD NOTHING: THEY WAS LEFT WITH NOTHING.

MORRISON: So, they wanted them to be uneducated.

MALONE: They wanted them to be off the land; they had no use for them. So, they sent them to the cities all over the place. And they are the same citizens and congressmen who rant and rave about the welfare system. They should be made to subsidize them, because they took them; they used them up; they used up their parents; they didn't educate them, and then they sent them off to the big cities with nothing. Like this woman had nothing but a ticket and at that particular time; all she was going to get from Mississippi to live in St. Louis was eight dollars per month per child. And no child in St. Louis can live off of eight dollars a month.

MORRISON: What year was this?

MALONE: That was about...that was in the sixties...the late sixties.

MORRISON: So, you're still in that organization, now?

MALONE: Yes, I'm still in that organization. I still work with that organization. I don't know who they're going to get to head it. It's more or less a church organization...the money was being paid by the Christian Church to do this. And they paid me a pretty good salary for it.

MORRISON: Were you in charge of it before this?

MALONE: No, no...I never was in charge of it. I just worked with it. We found one woman over in south St. Louis living in a house with nothing. I mean, she had absolutely nothing, nothing to cook on, anything. They were able to get a house under this 235 Program, and move her and give them something to live on. And this just goes on and on and on. Case after case like that.

MORRISON: Would you say the racism in the North is different from the South, because people in the North are different?

MALONE: People in the North don't know blacks. Nobody here really knows me now, you know? They don't know where I come from; they just see me here every day. And I go back to my little area and they go back to theirs.

MORRISON: They don't know what it was like in the South?

MALONE: They don't know what it's like in St. Louis in black areas. They don't know black people, you know...they have no contacts.

MORRISON: In the South...like, you say, it was integrated.

MALONE: In the South at least they knew you. They knew you as a human being. They knew you came from a house, they knew you lived in a house and the kind of house you lived in. They knew your family background; they knew something about you. You wasn't...everybody wasn't just lumped...because everybody knew everybody. It's because of the neighborhood integration in the neighborhoods. Now, Billy Williams plays with the Chicago Cubs and Hank Aaron plays with the Atlanta Braves, Cleon Jones was with the Mets

and Tommy Agee...all these kids played ball right by my house. Well, the white kids and the black kids all played ball. They all came to our house, and they all stayed on our porch where they'd drink when the ballgame was over. They grew up knowing each other. As human beings.

MORRISON: Then you were saying it's just the laws...

MALONE: The laws kept them separated.

MORRISON: So, it was just the politicians who were making the laws?

MALONE: The politicians that made the laws and it was profitable to keep them separate. It's profitable to keep any group separated at a certain level, you know.

MORRISON: If you were above them!

MALONE: Yes, it was profitable for Stix to say to the sales people...at Stix...that, "You have a good job, because we don't hire blacks here. And we can pay you 35-40 cents an hour." You know... that was before retail was covered; retail was covered in 1938, but they took them all out, you know. It wasn't covered by the minimum wage. But, see, Stix and Famous didn't hire blacks, and they was very proud. They wasn't making anything, or doing any better, but they felt better. You know, they felt superior, and they were able to keep...it's easy for companies to separate the workers, you know, from the union...as long as you can separate, you can keep control, you know. And you keep everybody down. When you keep them separate. The pulp people in Mississippi was never able to organize a union until they was able to see what was happening to them, because the pulp people who owned the mills said...okay...they told the black workers that the white workers was on strike...they said, "Why would you follow them?" We desegregated our lunchrooms... they didn't want you to eat in the lunchroom...they didn't want you using the restrooms...so they was able to keep the blacks...the blacks came in and they used them as strikebreakers because they were able to separate the workers... and as long as they keep you separated, they are going to control you. But when the workers got together themselves and said, "They are using all of us" then they was able to organize a union.

MORRISON: So, there were a lot of different levels and classes of people.

MALONE: There was a lot of different levels and classes everywhere... you know, we have classes of blacks everywhere...we are better than them...or, you have classism of them everywhere. You know, classism is just as bad as racism and it's just as damaging...it's more dangerous than racism...because, racism is just between races, you know, and you know where it is and you can define it. But classism is even worse in my judgment.

MORRISON: So, when did you join the Caucus?

MALONE: Let's see...I joined in 1971-72. That's another thing. I differ with them in a lot of things, and I have gotten into a lot of trouble over it. Because, they talk about ERA...which I would never oppose equal rights for anybody...but I talk about protective legislation for all workers, all people need who...who need...some kind of protection. And there's a lot of

people who die who work real hard for protective legislation. In California, you know, they had fifty laws on their books to protect women and children, but who is going to profit when you eliminate these laws? Management is going to profit, not the workers, and my position is, if you have a law on the books, extend it to men; their position is...wipe the books clean, and then we'll talk about protective legislation. But once you get them off, it's hard to get them back, because it probably took them 50 years to get them on in the first place.

MORRISON: Are you trying to say that if they start over again, it will be a hard job...

MALONE: You will have a hard time getting a wage and hour law passed in Missouri, you know. An overtime provision, that all overtime should be voluntary, men shouldn't have to work all these hours either if they don't want to.

MORRISON: And women should be able to if they want to.

MALONE: Women should be able to if they want to, and men shouldn't have to if they don't want to. So, every law that we have on the books in Missouri can be extended to men. You know, we had the nine-hour law women. You could have said, nobody or no man should work over nine hours if they don't want to. You know, no company could force you to work over nine hours if you don't want to. If a union contract, you have that protection, you know...in our contract, nobody can. It's all voluntary. But in a UAW contract, all over time is not voluntary. That was one of their provisions in this last agreement, and they still didn't get it going. And another...women shouldn't or can't work in dangerous mines. Men shouldn't have to work in dangerous mines either.

MORRISON: That's right, yes.

MALONE: No one should have to work in dangerous mines. Now, that is not the basis of the 1962 law. Another one they had...if women worked in a factory, you have to provide seats for them you know...for lunches and breaks...but men wait there in Missouri. They don't have to sit down to eat. That could be extended to men. And the third one, you have to keep the buildings clean...because women aren't supposed to breathe the steam. Men shouldn't have to breathe it either. And that is where we differ. They say, "If you pass the ERA, we will have to change all these laws, which EEOC is doing anyway..."

MORRISON: What is EEOC?

MALONE: That is Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

MORRISON: Oh.

MALONE: Any of these laws could have been extended to men and women...all women all over the country should have taken that position...where the law is good. They had a minimum wage law in California for women and children for \$1.65. It was 5 cents more than the federal limit. But men had no minimum wage. They could work a man for \$1.00...they could; it just depended on what they wanted to give him. That could have been extended to men, you know...which they did get it extended to men. And then when they got down to seats, they got hung up; the state legislature debated on whether we should have [unclear]...or longshoremen.

MORRISON: Like for launching?

MALONE: Yeah...like you know...longshoremen...they will usually go to work and unload a boat and go home. They get paid for every boat they unload, because everyone of them is from a different company. If a company brings a ship in, he's going to unload it and go home. It's not like an 8-hour job. So, that county should not have brought in longshoremen. See, nobody expects that...but if they work in a factory, men should have seats, too, just like women. And who's going to profit?

MORRISON:...if they don't have them. Did they have them at the time?

MALONE: They don't now, no. Just women have seats. You know, they had this thing in California...like women...when they work at nights, like the telephone company, they provided guards, taxi-fares and all that when women went home.

MORRISON: When they went home?

MALONE: Men should have had the same thing, and women should have fought for that, but they didn't. This is eliminated. They want equal rights...and everyone wants equal rights...but you don't hear a thing about good laws...all good laws that protect people and rights against this corporate dollar-hunter.

MORRISON: Are you against the Equal Rights Amendment?

MALONE: No, oh, no. I am not against it, but I think that when you talk about it, there should be some provisions made for these kinds of things. They will argue with me about that, but I still tell them.

MORRISON: Well, I didn't mean you were against it...but against some of the things that they want to put in?

MALONE: I think that it should be these provisions. I think that with the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, I think we will have a better chance and be much more effective than if we had to sit down and write into the Equal Rights Amendment. Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment. The kind of people that voted for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment had never voted for a piece of progressive social legislation in their lives, because they were not concerned about it, you know...they were not concerned about peoples' rights. They said, "Oh, they've got all these laws here protecting these folks. If we get rid of them, we'll have a segment that we can always use. Black women will suffer under the ERA...some divisions...because a lot of them don't belong to the unions. A lot of women who work, 41% of the workers, and only 10% organized. A lot of them are going to have to suffer because we have no weight-lifting law in Missouri...that should have been brought in. We should have a weight-lifting law in Missouri. Men -Men should not have to lift anything that you can't lift any more than women.

MORRISON: So, there is no law for men or women?

MALONE: No law for men or women. No law. We're going to go back to 1969.Back-to-

back shifts, if we don't watch it. These kinds of things slip up on you when you don't realize what is going on.

MORRISON: What is the basic philosophy of the Women's Political Caucus?

MALONE: The basic philosophy of the Caucus is ERA in St. Louis. Now, out of that Caucus, we had a real good letter from the Minimum Wage Committee stating that we worked real hard on the federal minimum wage...increasing the minimum wage...at the federal level, we asked for \$3.50 minimum wage law based on what the Bureau of Statistics says it takes for a family to live on. We even prepared budgets for a family to live on at \$1.67 an hour, and it was read into the Congressional Records. And we worked real hard to get domestic workers covered under the federal minimum wage and the state, and we lost the state minimum wage by one vote...Ray Howard voted against it.

MORRISON: He did?

MALONE: Yes, because he said the state bill didn't cover domestics. Well, nothing in this state...domestics wouldn't have been covered anyway, because anyone who was covered under the federal, would not have been covered under the state. We had 350,000 when we started out that were not covered by any minimum. Missouri is one of 11-12 states that have no state minimum wage law.

MORRISON: Just the federal.

MALONE: Just the federal.

MORRISON: Why weren't you active in the NAACP? Or weren't you...or why didn't you first join it in St. Louis?

MALONE: I just joined because I really believe in the legal defense form that they have. They are probably one of the best legal departments of any group in the country...you know, starting out then with Thoroughgood Marshall...good, constitutional lawyers who really know the constitution. That's why I work with NAACP. The NAACP is one organization that has really done some really good things. But sometimes the personality conflicts at the local level would keep you from actually getting involved...keep you from attending meetings...you know. I am just against people who don't work...who don't do anything, but make a name for themselves and sit at the head tables.

MORRISON: That's what they're doing now?

MALONE: Well, you have a lot of people in St. Louis who are blacks who do very little else but sit at the head tables and present people like Duncan Dahlmann awards...like Reverend Leeby did...which I thought was a diaster.

MORRISON: What was the award for?

MALONE: All centered on community service, and all Duncan Dahlmann and the rich Globe-Democrat has ever done was condemn blacks...and I've had my bowels with them. Because Dr. Blackmyer once compiled an editorial, a large set of editorials, and gave them to

me one time...from the Globe-Democrat. He says, "Now, you can't ask people not to read the Globe..." Of course, I did. I asked people not to read it; well, you know, I guess I was wrong, because you do need to read the other side, but when the other side is so ridiculous...I think it is one of the worst newspapers in the world...and they presented him with an award for outstanding service, I guess, to the community; they threw him a big dinner. But these are the kinds of things that really turn you away from being active in organizations like the NAACP...other than the Legal Defense Council of the NAACP.

MORRISON: Was that part of the NAACP?

MALONE: The Legal Defense Council?

MORRISON: Yeah, in the NAACP.

MALONE: That is a separate thing from the NAACP, but it is a part of the NAACP...it's just like COE in the AFL-CIO...COPE is the political arm of the AFL-CIO.

MORRISON: Is that the same Legal Defense...

MALONE: No, the Legal Defense Forum...deals only in legal matters. They're had some really controversial cases because, you know, they will go to the Supreme Court, and in many, many cases even rent got to these justices, and they still have some really good lawyers in the NAACP. And they did some real good things...it is one of the most respected organizations around...but I'm, you know...maybe it's just me...I'm just kind of tired of the sorority and fraternity crowd being in charge, setting at their table...going to banquets and lining the stage with their things. That's another thing...I just hate their tables. You know, I think politicians come in and they all sit at the head table, away as far away from the people as they can get. I think they should be at the table with the people who they represent, trying to find out what their problems are, you know. Every politician...no politician should ever sit at no head table. He should be sitting right at the table listening to the people he represents; he's sitting way up at the head table...on the stage...they get up and make a glorious speech...many of them leave. They [politicians] are so far removed from the people.

MORRISON: Is this in St. Louis?

MALONE: That's all over!

MORRISON: I mean in the NAACP?

MALONE: Oh...NAACP? Oh, no...that's not all over. The NAACP in St. Louis has done some real good things, though. They worked hard on housing. They worked really hard on housing. Like, they have a good program going. I work on the program, but this continual meetings...somebody reading the minutes, somebody writing reports, reading a poem, maybe; it's boring...maybe it's just me. You know it could be just me! You know, I'm terribly bored with people who write nice reports, [laughter] I'm much more comfortable in the streets with the people, listening to what the people have to say, because the people really have a message...workers really have a message. You know, they have to have...they don't have to study and write reports! You just talk to the workers. They can tell you what's going on...what's happening to them. They know.

MORRISON: Did you ever think that you might run for political office?

MALONE: No, no. No, I don't think I'd ever run for political office! I have to work. I'd have to quit my job to run for political office...you couldn't work for a union and run for political office...that wouldn't be...the Post-Dispatch would take a dim view of that! [laughter]

[END OF SIDE 2]

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