

**STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS**  
**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FORUM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

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**FRANKIE FREEMAN INTERVIEWED BY BLANCHE TOUHILL**

Frankie Freeman: I'm Frankie Freeman. I was born in Danville, Virginia, November the 24<sup>th</sup>, 1916. My mother was a teacher and my father worked for the posting service as a railway postal clerk. So Danville, Virginia was the last capitol of the Confederacy and everything in Danville was racially segregated. We grew up in believing the equality of our people so our parents said that we would accept only what we had to accept and we would oppose and resist and try to change what can be changed. So, that is why, because the street cars required Black people, African Americans to sit in the rear. That's why we did not ride the buses or the streetcars. We walked to school. We walked wherever we had to go. If we were going downtown to shop, we would walk, and, of course, if downtown had places that would not want us to be served, we did not go there. We did not shop at any place where we were not treated the way we thought we should be treated. That's why most of our clothes were...our parents had someone who would make our clothes, because, if we couldn't try them on, we couldn't buy it. So I learned from the beginning that if you believe that all people are created equal and they should be treated that way, that we had a responsibility to do what God wants us to do and that is be ever ready to make a change.

Blanche Touhill: Was this only in your family or was this in the whole neighborhood?

Frankie Freeman: It was not only in my family. There were people who accepted this. We were fortunate in that at least our family had the resources so there were things that we could say we were not going to do because my grandparents, my grandfather, who lived in Penhook, Virginia, Franklin County, Virginia, was a tobacco farmer and he was effective and productive and so the resources made a difference but it was because at least you had the training. So, always in my family, we knew that the

children...my parents said, every child has to get, not just a high school education; you have to get a college education. So, that is what happened. Every one of us had...my mother was a...they had eight children but two of them died, one at infancy and one later on, but all six of us were not only getting a necessary degree, but at least you...which was a Bachelor's, but to get beyond that where your job required it.

Blanche Touhill: Was the elementary and high school, did that provide you with the knowledge to go on to college?

Frankie Freeman: Yes, it did but (there wasn't?) any limitation, you see, because my mother had been a teacher so therefore we didn't have to rely on just when we got in the training and the school, although we had good teachers. They, themselves, resisted the fact...did not object to the fact; did not agree for the racial segregation, at least those that were friends of ours. So, at least...every book that was bought, every book that was available, my parents...we grew up with knowing Black history, the history and so we sometimes felt that we were expected to do more, a certain outrage developed sometimes. We were expected to do more than we wanted to do.

Blanche Touhill: Did all your siblings carry out that message throughout their life?

Frankie Freeman: Every one of us, yeah. One of my...I had four brothers and a sister. My youngest brother was also a lawyer but I was a...because I was the oldest child, I became a lawyer first but my brother, Bill, he finished...all of them finished college and he became a banker and one of the brothers got his doctorate and he was working at South Carolina State College. Another brother was Edward (Bemuse?), he worked as a director of [inaudible 5:42] membership for the national NAACP over a number of years, but unfortunately, I had four brothers and they are all deceased. Only my sister who is now retired also.

Blanche Touhill: Where did you go to college?

Frankie Freeman: Hampton and Howard University School of Law. I received my degree from Howard University School of Law in 1947 and I took the bar in Washington in 1947 and I passed it; however, it was because I was married and my husband was a St. Louisan and we were living in Washington, that was during the period of World War II but his plan was

to come back to St. Louis. My plan was to come to Missouri and that's when we did.

Blanche Touhill: Tell us about when you came to St. Louis. You established a small law firm?

Frankie Freeman: Yes, oh, yes, because when I finished, I had finished second in my class and friends in Washington knew lawyers in St. Louis and they knew law firms and they...because I had ranked very high, they wrote to them and suggested that they at least listen to me when I made the call. When I made the call to the law firms, I didn't get any answer but then I got some...even some of the Black law firms said that I could work for them but they had [inaudible 07:29] but I could do the research. I was going to be a trial lawyer. I had studied Constitution law. I was determined I was going to be a civil rights lawyer so when they said that I could work in their office as a researcher, then I decided and I said to my husband, "I want to have my own law office" and so he agreed and so we...at Jefferson Bank on Franklin Avenue, there was a law firm that was in there on the second floor of that building and one of the lawyers was going to move to California. So I rented space on the second floor and opened my office as a sole practitioner of Frankie Muse Freeman, Attorney-At-Law and that was in 1949, because I was admitted to the bar in Missouri by 1948.

Blanche Touhill: Did your husband...was he a lawyer too?

Frankie Freeman: No, my husband, he worked for the Department of (Economy?) as a technical...yeah.

Blanche Touhill: So he just transferred back to St. Louis or how did that work?

Frankie Freeman: Yes, but he had no problem...he had been working for them.

Blanche Touhill: That was a very interesting time in the United States and in St. Louis. Did you get involved in the Jefferson Bank or...

Frankie Freeman: Oh, first of all, before that...you see, when I came to St. Louis and opened my office, I opened my office as a sole practitioner and I was ready to accept anything because...then I was admitted to not only the Missouri Bar but, because I had been admitted in Washington, to the Federal Court, then I at least identified myself and was admitted to the Federal

Court here and I was also going to be accepted in the civil rights cases. So I was a member of the NAACP. I got in touch with Randolph and Bob Witherspoon and told them that if any cases come up, I would be willing to join you and there was a case that came up early in '49, shortly after I met them, and they asked me to at least join them. That was Rudin vs. St. Louis Board of Education. So the first civil rights case in which I was involved was filed in 1949.

Blanche Touhill: Isn't that wonderful. Now, name some other cases that you were involved in.

Frankie Freeman: Davis...with respect to housing discrimination, there was...you see, the law in the Southern states before 1954 was required racial segregation, separate but equal, but there was no such law with respect to low income housing. The Housing Authority in the City of St. Louis had...first of all, there were two. One was on Clinton and the other one's Cosgrave [inaudible 10:51] hesitated during the war and then after the war, they were building and they built Cochran designated for White families. In the meantime, Black families, veterans who had come back, were looking for housing so they were denied housing to Cochran told them they should wait for Pruitt Igoe. So, that was the case that the NAACP...I was involved in that case as a lead attorney because the national office supported that and we filed and that was Davis vs. St. Louis Housing Authority which we filed in Federal Court against the St. Louis Housing Authority and the St. Louis Housing Authority justified it because the pattern was that Black people and White people did not live together and did not want to live together. Anyway, we argued that case in 1955. That was following 1954, Brown vs. Board of Education. The Federal Judge Malloy issued an order saying that this was unconstitutional and declaring that segregation would have to be eliminated. When that case was filed, because of the pattern that was here in St. Louis, I had decided that if we won it, that it would be good but if we did not win it, I would have to take it to the Supreme Court. So, in 1952, while it was still pending, I got myself admitted to the Supreme Court of the United States. However, the case...we won the case and about four or five months after the case was won, the administration of the Housing Authority had changed. Charlie Ferris was the director and they were accepting. They said they were going to accept the opinion. In early 1956, he called me and he said, "Frankie, you won the case. We are going to

work to make it happen and so I want to offer you a position as associate general counsel.” By that time, I was ready for a position because I had been arguing these cases; however, the income was rather limited and with respect to the NAACP cases, it was almost...well, anyway...I was ready to accept. The general counsel happened to be a person that I knew and apparently had accepted it and so I became the Associate General Counsel of the St. Louis Housing Land Clearance Authority in 1956.

Blanche Touhill: I want to go back a bit: when you went to law school, was there a sense at Howard that the society was going to change and that there would be constitutional challenges?

Frankie Freeman: Absolutely because, first of all, Howard Law School never did deny admission on the basis of gender or race. So there were...not many women but there was always at least some women who were students at Howard Law School. Also, because of Howard University and where it is, the NAACP...very often some of the faculty of the law school were involved in those cases. In fact, Charlie Houston, one of the former deans was one of the lead attorneys in many of the civil rights cases that had been filed through the years because, you see, Brown vs. Board of Education was an effective one, it was well known but the cases challenging racial discrimination had been filed by the NAACP over the years long before then.

Blanche Touhill: Now, I want to go back then to your high school. In high school, why did you choose law, or in college, undergraduate school?

Frankie Freeman: Well, I decided...first of all, as I said, we did not accept racial segregation but it was when I was at Hampton that I decided, well, there are lawyers who are working on this. I’m going to become a lawyer and I’m going to work to make a change.

Blanche Touhill: So really, your parents’ decision to oppose segregation and to be an advocate for civil rights for all really was the basis...I mean, that was something in your family that you accepted and then really helped make the decision to go into law and helped make the decision to go into constitutional law.

Frankie Freeman: That’s right, first of all, because my family believed that if the law was not being implemented, they believed absolutely in working to make a

change and so they encouraged us to do that and they supported my decision to be a lawyer, even though at that time, there were very, very few females because it was a matter of gender. It was not just a matter of race in becoming a lawyer; it was also, at that time, a matter of gender. But in our family, with the brothers and sisters that I had, that was never a job that just the girls had or the boys. Whatever had to be done was to be done by a boy or girl or whatever needed to be done. So that's what we all grew up recognizing, that you had a job to do and you had to do it without regard to whether it was a boy or a girl.

Blanche Touhill: When you worked for the Housing Authority, how long were you there?

Frankie Freeman: I was...and I had also, I wanted to say, before then, I had been active also in the Democratic party but so when I worked with at the Housing Authority, I was, of course, under the [inaudible 17:58] because the Housing Authority was federally funded. So I worked in the Housing Authority for 14 years, from 1956; however, in 1963...prior to that, other people had at least asked me...at the national level, I had received contacts and I was active and very active in the NAACP. So then when President Kennedy was elected, one of the things that he announced was that he was going to at least work for more women to be included in executive positions. It was November 17<sup>th</sup> of 1963 that I was at the White House being interviewed with member of President's Kennedy staff concerning an appointment to the U.S. Commission of Civil Rights. That following week, on November 22<sup>nd</sup>, he was assassinated. I thought that was over with. Of course, at that time, we were all in mourning. Vice President Johnson had become the President but I was at that time still employed by the St. Louis Housing Authority. It was in February of 1964 that President Johnson was scheduled to come to a special...February 14<sup>th</sup>, I'm not sure about the big trip to a big dinner sponsored by the Democratic party and we were planning to go because we were all...my husband and I and there were other people, other friends who bought tickets and had planned to be at that event. My office at the Housing Authority, on that morning, I received a call from the White House that President Johnson, who would be in St. Louis that afternoon, wanted to meet with me at the Chase Park Plaza Hotel and asked if I would be there at 5:00 o'clock. I was surprised to get that but I wrote down all of the things that he told me and I think it was Jack Valenti who spoke with me...and wrote it down and I said, yes, I would be there and then I called

my husband at his job and told him that we would have to leave early because I was invited to meet with the President. Of course, I don't know how Sheldon felt about it but anyway, I said I'm going to leave the office earlier and I did. Anyway, we left early and drove to the Chase and, of course, he had been in town all day and there was a crowd. When I got to Maryland and Kingshighway, there was a crowd. However, the notes that I had taken from the conversation, I had with in my purse and so I decided...I was on the corner of Maryland and Kingshighway and I, in spite of the crowds, I crossed the street and the police said, "Oh, you can't cross the street" and I said, "I've got to meet...the President wants to meet with me." Anyway, he took my notes, he went back and then he came back and said, "Come with me," and they took me into the hotel and asked me to sit down on the lobby level. While was I sitting there, the congresswoman passed by and said, "Congratulations." I just said, "Hi," and so after I was sitting there a while, then they came and took me up to talk where the President was, outside of his office and said, "He'll be with you shortly." Then, later, they said, "He's ready to see you" and there he was, standing. So I walked and I remember, I was all dressed up and I just held onto my...I remember that...I said, "Hello," and he recognized that I was nervous and so I sat down and he talked and then I think he recognized that I was at least getting myself together. So finally he said, "I'm here because I want you to be a member of the Civil Rights Commission. I've checked you out. I checked with the Urban League, Rob Wilkins, Whitney Young but I didn't tell them that you were female because...I just told them that I wanted to ask them about you but I didn't tell them what it was because, for a commission such as the Civil Rights Commission, only had six males. They always had one African American and so I wanted them to accept you. They all said good things about you but they did not know at the time that you were being considered for the Civil Rights Commission." After that, then he told me about his plan for a war against poverty and he talked about that and then he said, and what did I think about the Commission. I realized that Father Hessberg and Chris Rawl at Harlem Law School and the president of Michigan...I said, "They're all presidents, so he said, "Oh, you can handle those deans." Anyway, I said, "Okay, thank you."

Blanche Touhill: You didn't say, "I want to think about it"?

Frankie Freeman: So then he said, "But now, you are going to be...you have to go for the senate confirmation..." that will get me checked out and all, "so you think of any organizations that you belong to..."...and actually, I couldn't think of any. I said, "I'm a Baptist." That's all I could think of. I couldn't even think of NAACP and so he said, "Oh, that's all right." Anyway, that day, I was relaxed by that time and so I could...but I remember always what he said in terms of what he wanted to do and especially the war against poverty and as I think about that, because through the years, there's not been any commitment against poverty in the way that he described what he wanted to do.

Blanche Touhill: How was your work on the Commission?

Frankie Freeman: Work on the Commission? I ended up, following the confirmation, I was there for 16 years. It was very interesting and actually, it was a part-time job because all of the presidents had it. So what I had to do immediately was at least talk to the head of the agency and it was agreed that I would use my annual leave because I would not be paid by the Housing Authority; I would continue as a member of the staff at the Housing Authority and also [inaudible 26:33] and travel at the expense of the Commission, which would have been about traveling to Washington for the hearings about two days a month, unless there was a hearing which would be longer. So that's the way it was and it was pretty interesting.

Blanche Touhill: Did the men accept you right away?

Frankie Freeman: Yes. By that time, I think they had done some homework too and so they did. I mean, actually it was, by the time I met them...what happened was that immediately after the announcement...there was, of course, an announcement before I faced the confirmation and of course, during the process of the confirmation, the senators who were from the Southern states and the senator from North Carolina, said to me, after the hearing in which I was actually confirmed, but he said, "I cannot support you because I don't believe there should be a Civil Rights Commission" and I remember that I said, "Well, you said you have good credentials" and I said, "Thank you. You just do the best you can." Anyway, I was confirmed by voice votes.

Blanche Touhill: Talk about the Commission. What were the hearings like?



Frankie Freeman: Very interesting, always public and the first hearing was the one that I think is still very important because that was during the period...you know, in 1965, we were in Jackson, Mississippi for our hearing on voting rights and denial of voting rights and, of course, equal justice. During that period...that was because there had been murders of people trying to vote. There were two counties in Mississippi that, even though there was a majority of African Americans living there, there was not one Black person registered to vote. There was a denial of the voting rights and so our focus was on the voting rights. So we had staff who did an initial...oh, several months' interpretation of checking out and to confirm where we would bring our witnesses from because there had been three murders and there had been all kinds of beatings and there were four churches that had been burned in Canton, Mississippi because they worked to get people voting. That was the basis for that hearing. We held that hearing in February of 1965. When I arrived, one of the things that the Commission did was to find a place where we would live and which there would be no segregation there so we all lived...we all were in the same hotel. So, of course, the hearings were at places where at places where federally you know, there would be no question about that. One of the things that happened even the first day was that...well, I got some special attention from the newspaper because...that article was that...they actually said that "this..."...you know, I think they said, "colored woman who is in Mississippi to challenge our laws." Then they had an old article about things that were happening in St. Louis that said that I should have stayed in St. Louis. But anyway, there was this article. However, we had the testimony from the officials and we had testimony from the victims. What we did though was...I wanted to go to Canton to see the churches that had been bombed. That was before the hearing started. So I asked the staff, I wanted a car to take me there and they said, "Oh, we can't go there" and this was before the hearing started. I said, "Well, you can't go there. Just get me a car; I'll go there." I think they realized that I would do that. So then they called me and said, "We're going there," and so actually, Griswold and his wife and I and some of the staff and some of the marshals, we all went. Now, from that day on, for every hearing that we ever had, whenever there had been a charge of a place in a city about something, the staff would check it out before then. Anyway, during that hearing, what we did with the testimony when they would say that the denial of the Voting Rights Act, because they couldn't read the

Constitution of Mississippi, so what Dean Griswold did for one of the persons who was administering that, was gave him one of the portion of the Constitution that he had given to a voter and ask him to interpret it. He couldn't interpret it. All of the hearings were publicized on TV. So therefore some of the people in Mississippi learned about things that are happening that they hadn't known. One of the things that...so we made recommendations and that was the purpose of the Commission, was once you get the testimony and once it is developed, you make recommendations to the president and the Congress. At that time...that was in February of '65. There were three recommendations. We issued a report but three recommendations were made to the existing pending Voting Rights Act and those recommendations were included and titled Section V is one of the recommendations that has helped a lot of people vote, is still one of the things that I think we accomplished as a result of that particular, which was the first hearing that I participated in but it was a five-day public hearing. Prior to that time, we had even received testimony from officials that had been charged. The governor of Mississippi appeared at our hearing and announced that Mississippi was going to obey the law. I think there were 17 hearings over the years that we participated in, but in terms of the Voting Rights Act...and I think that was one of the most significant, but it was not limited through the years...that we had hearings with respect to women's rights; we had hearings about the rights of Native Americans, and as I said, we also had hearings on the federal government's enforcement of the Civil Rights laws. We held a hearing in St. Louis County in January of 1970 which was, of course, the first [inaudible 35:11] hearing that was held and during all of this time, I was still working as associate general counsel of the Housing Authority. At that time, I was primarily a general counsel of the Housing Authority and (Dagan?) was a general counsel of the Land Clearance Authority.

Blanche Touhill: Can you talk about the women's hearing, the Civil Rights hearing for women?

Frankie Freeman: One of the things, especially employment, gender discrimination, the glass ceiling. Testimony came about that and we focused on that and one of the things that we recognized, it was not just race; there was gender and in many instances, you were trying to pit one against the other. What our hearings would do...were effective and we tried to at least make it

very clear that equality for all people includes any problem that you have...if you have a problem against one, you cannot say you do not have a problem against the other. We worked and, of course, for the 16 years, I was the only female but that's changed now. It was hard and was difficult but it was a blessing to me; I was pleased.

Blanche Touhill: Talk a little bit about the federal regulations. Were there charges that the regulations were not carried out?

Frankie Freeman: Yes, we issued a report, I think in 19...I'm not sure, it was in 1970, because I think it was when Nixon...I'm not sure...that was lack of...even though we had the laws that, in some instances, the federal government was not enforcing those laws and one of the reasons why we held a hearing...because then also the president had issued an order requiring that whenever there'd be a government contract issued to a company, that there would be no discrimination on the basis of race or gender. We decided that we were going to hold a hearing in the St. Louis County and examine the contracts and whether there had been the affirmative action clause in the contracts, Mallinckrodt, McDonnell, and there were three other companies that were included in this. There had been an investigation by the staff and we knew which ones they were. When that hearing was convened and when we found out that McDonnell-Douglas had been issued a contract for the (the engine, the airplane? F-15) and however, they had no an approved affirmative action requirement. When that testimony came out and it was brought to us by the Department of Defense, then we immediately contacted the Air Force to find out what happened. They found out that also that happened that they hadn't issued that contract and it had not been approved, they suspended the contract. Then the Globe Democrat, in its editorial, said...we were talking about the employment practices of McDonnell-Douglas and that there was no problem there and therefore, they said...this was a tempest in a teapot. As a Commissioner who lived in St. Louis, I answered that editorial and said that it was not a tempest in a teapot and also gave them some specific information about, that, yes, there were African Americans employed but the majority of them were at the lowest level and that the federal government's contract had not been approved. What happened in the meantime, the Air Force was reviewing the contract because they had put it under suspension. When I got to my office, I received...the morning that that letter appeared...I received a

letter from [inaudible 40:24] commissioner of the St. Louis Housing Authority informing me that I was being terminated as of the end of that day, as of 5:30 that day. Well, actually, what I did was I got myself together and I was out of there by 2:30 that day but in the meantime, they had gotten in the news and they wanted to know if I was going to file a complaint. No, I'm not going to file a complaint; to whom am I going to file a complaint? In the meantime, of course, the commissioners were concerned but what happened was, that the McDonnell-Douglas got its contract, got all of the requirements back in order. They were approved so the contract was, on suspension only for 10 days and so, of course, they got their work back together and the plan, of course, was completed. However, I decided that I was not going to file a complaint. I was going back into private practice and do the best I could as a private practice. So the only thing I did after that was to at least...my brother called me, who was a lawyer and said, "Well, at least, if you're not going to file a complaint, at least take a few days off and go somewhere." So I did two things: I went to Florida for a few days and then I decided, I need to do something for me and so I went down to Stix, Baer, and Fuller and I ordered a mink coat, and they said, "How are you going to pay for it?" I said, "Put it on my charge," but of course the charge was in my husband's name.

Blanche Touhill: How did you have the strength to keep going?

Frankie Freeman: My prayer, my commitment...my commitment. I was not easy because I was a mother; I was a wife, but I had already been trained, and see, I grew up in church. We went to Sunday School, church. Whatever was going on in church, you were there and if you had to participate, if there was something that needed to be done, so we were trained, in other words. Once you make a commitment, that is your goal; you follow it. You do the best you can, with faith and prayer. But if I believe in democracy, I have to work for it and that was my commitment and that's still my commitment.

Blanche Touhill: If you look on all the things that you've done, can you talk about one or two or three that you think are...like your work with the St. Louis Public Schools or something...

Frankie Freeman: What happens, some days you're doing one thing and so then you...so I returned to law practice and I was in law practice until 1960...2009 but I

left the Civil Rights Commission in 1980. But in the meantime, Carter had appointed me to Inspector General and so I lived in Washington for 15 months until, of course...see, I served on the...Nixon, Ford, Carter...Johnson, Nixon, Ford and Carter.

Blanche Touhill: And almost Kennedy.

Frankie Freeman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: But not quite.

Frankie Freeman: Yes, right. Then, of course, when Carter lost the election and the date, you see, of the inauguration, all the Inspectors General were dismissed and they were dismissed because the president said he wanted us to reapply because he wanted people who were...that would be forceful. At that time, I had been in Washington and I decided that, no, I needed to come back and I was not going to reapply. So I returned to the law practice and however, then I handled a civil rights case against SIUE School of Dentistry because one of the...person the problem had been against in the School of Dentistry, the denial of equal access to Black students and that was one of the...I think that was one of the last major cases that I had...what I'd been involved in civil rights and enforcement, one or the other and working in the community. During all of that time, I had a husband, I had children. I had a son who became ill and who was ill for a while but again, with faith and work and support from family and friends, I've survived at least.

Blanche Touhill: And thrived. Do you want to talk about the International Women's Forum?

Frankie Freeman: Yes, and that was very...I think that is so important because one of the things that, if you were working, as I do in lawyers...and you get into certain positions. You still have the need to at least have somebody to relate...can share your problems and will understand some of the problems. When I first heard about it through dear friends of mine, Cynthia Thompson and Yvonne Thompson, who lived not far from me on Waterman...were talking about that and I was impressed because, when they gave me some of the names of the people who were...they were all women who had also worked and who also had had problems, one way or the other. I mean, there was not any member of the International Women's Forum...I was impressed with them, judges and all and so I

knew that they may not have had the same problems but in a certain way, they were. But we were all blessed too and I was very...and I am still very impressed because, first of all, of the recognition of the need for diversity, the recognition of a need for sharing and for caring and for helping each other and that's why some of the programs, at least the dinner, some of the programs that give you an opportunity to at least learn from each other. We all learn from each other. I was very pleased to hear about it and then, of course, when I was invited to become a member, I was especially pleased and I did not hesitate. Of course, I still enjoy it, although I have less time that I can go to all of those...to those events but everyone is very important to this community and to this state.

Blanche Touhill: When you came to St. Louis, you joined the NAACP and you're still involved with the NAACP. Is that right?

Frankie Freeman: I'm still a member of the executive committee but I'm very...first of all, you have to say, over the years, I joined the NAACP, I was very active. I attended the meetings. I'm still on the executive committee. I have (actually) handled a number of issues on behalf of NAACP but in terms of participating in the meetings, I can't attend all the meetings, nor do I try and they now tell me they don't even expect it, but I am honored to have received the NAACP highest honor, the Spingarn. I received that in 2011 because I had worked with Thurgood (Marshall) and Constance Baker Motley who was my co-counsel in the Davis case. So I am also a member of the Urban League and a member of the board. I've been a member of the University of Missouri Chancellor's Council and what happens, though, if you get involved...you're involved in one and then somebody asks you to be involved in another so sometimes you find out you're involved in too much; you need to get out, and I'm trying to...

Blanche Touhill: In many cases, you were the first woman in doing this or the first woman doing that and you had to work with a lot of men. Do you want to talk about that at all?

Frankie Freeman: Well, I didn't have any problem with them because what happened was...I mean, I was fortunate...first of all, I did not ever get into a discussion in terms of what you can't do. I think there were people who...there may have been people who thought that I couldn't do something but, you see, I worked with men, but even during my first trial,

I think that probably...first jury trial, I think that, for instance, the man didn't feel that he had a problem in terms of the trial until we were impaneling the jury. Then he realized that...but that, of course, is in terms of the...well, when I would go to court in the first years and I said, "I'm here for the case..."...and they say, "Well, wait for your lawyer." I said, "I'm the lawyer." But that was new, to have that to do. I recognize that but the problem...I also learned that if they had a problem, then they have a problem. I don't let that be my problem. I just do my best and then maybe they...but I have good relationships with my colleagues in the bar association and I know that there were...in the beginning years, I was not admitted, you know, because of race, you see. So sometimes you're not...it's a matter of race and not gender and sometimes it's both. But I have been honored by all of them and I'm blessed.

Blanche Touhill: Do you want to say anything else that we haven't touched on, any comment or...

Frankie Freeman: I don't know. Do you have any questions that you want to ask me?

Blanche Touhill: No, I think I have a very good view of what you experienced as a child and how that carried over as an adult and how your religious faith helped you to keep going and your belief in yourself and that really came from your parents.

Frankie Freeman: It does. In other words, I believe also...first of all, I have a daily prayer that I learned: "Order my steps. Help me to be of service. Help me to make a difference." Those are the things that our parents said. They were both involved in the community. Fortunately, I've never had the problem of at least not having the resources to do what needed to be done and so that was a blessing. That was a blessing and so, therefore...also, my mother, whenever there would be a student...she graduated from Hampton in 1911 so if there was a student that needed to go to...she would have to try to get scholarships. Always, she said, "Whatever you have, you share. Whoever you can help, you can because people have helped you." There's nothing that I can ever accomplish that has been accomplished by me, alone. It's because people have helped me.

Blanche Touhill: You know, as I was sitting here, I was thinking to myself, if you had been born 50 years earlier and you would have been, say, your mother's age, you wouldn't necessarily have become a lawyer, would you, but you

would have still carried that same message forward to your children. In other words, you became an active lawyer at a time in America when there was great social change and as a result of that, you were really able to be part of that social change.

Frankie Freeman: That was a blessing.

Blanche Touhill: That was the blessing. If you had been born 50 years earlier, you would have still had those same ideas of equality and civil rights but you might not have been able to be a part of the change as you were today.

Frankie Freeman: Well, I don't know. I can't...you know. I couldn't say.

Blanche Touhill: That's a good answer, isn't it, you don't know.

Frankie Freeman: I don't know; I don't know. I just say...and I've had a son who was ill for nine years, but we all have challenges but that is the basis of our belief, that at least if you have faith and if you have courage and if you work...my Christian faith says, do what you can to handle the challenges.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I think that's a wonderful way to end this interview. So thank you very much, Frankie. It was just lovely and I'm sure it's going to be of interest to scholars of the future. Thank you very much.

Frankie Freeman: Thank you.