

ORAL HISTORYT-0030
INTERVIEW WITH REBA MOSBY
INTERVIEWED BY DR. RICHARD RESH
BLACK COMMUNITY LEADERS PROJECT
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Our interview today, July 9, 1970, is with Dr. Reba Mosby, professor of Sociology at Harris Teachers' College. The interview is being conducted in her home and with the technical assistance of Mr. Franklin Rother.

RESH: Dr. Mosby, could you tell us something about your early life, where you were born, something about your background with the family, your mother and father?

MOSBY: Well, my parents were born in St. Louis, both my parents. We're, natives and we, my, on my mother's side we came from a family whose, the father in which was a barber on the steamboats down the Mississippi River. He was from New Orleans. My father's father was a Methodist minister. And they both lived, as I said before, and grew up in the St. Louis area. I attended the St. Louis public schools, Simmons School, and I recall their putting the first busses, introducing the busses in the city of St. Louis. I was a little girl at the time, my father was a caretaker in the west end of St. Louis, which was at that time a middle-class neighborhood, white. And we lived there where he worked.

RESH: About what year was this?

MOSBY: About, this was, oh, I guess around nineteen hundred, nineteen or twenty. And they may have been introduced a little earlier but I rode one of the first busses in St. Louis. And I never shall forget, I was, oh, I guess I was around ten at the time, it might have been a little earlier than nineteen, and the bus driver asked me to sit in the back because I had taken a front seat. But I knew positively that you were allowed to sit anywhere you wanted to sit. Even though I was a little girl, I remained in the front seat and he was livid, he was so angry with me. But I rode all the way from downtown to 5800 west without changing my seat. And that was the first experience I had actually had with, you know, any type of discriminatory practices because we, my mother's family was a very well-known family. My aunt was supposed to have been one of the prettiest Negro girls in St. Louis, her name was Maude White. And my mother was a beautiful woman. And they had all of their own friends, they were quite well-to-do at one time and then, of course, the family had fallen upon ill-luck and they had very little upon the marriage of my mother and my aunt. But my father and my mother were very anxious that I receive a college education. And so they decided that I could go to the college of my choice, and I selected the University of Cincinnati because I had friends who were going there. And I went from here to the University of Cincinnati. And I was, my graduating class from high school was very young.

RESH: What high school did you go to?

MOSBY: Sumner High School. In fact, I think our class was one of the youngest classes to graduate. So I had turned sixteen in November And in January I went to Cincinnati because I completed high school in three years. And then I lived with friends in Cincinnati and finished the University of Cincinnati in three and one-half years.

RESH: I wonder if I could back up just a little bit. You graduated from Sumner High School, about what year would this have been?

MOSBY: Oh, I graduated in 1925.

RESH: 1925. And at that time Sumner was the only....

MOSBY: Well, Sumner was the only school for Negroes, the only high school for Negroes. It was supposed to be the best high school for Negroes west of the Mississippi.

RESH: Oh, really?

MOSBY: And Frank L. Williams was principal and he was an outstanding educator. He was very well known throughout the country. And, let's see, they also had attached to Sumner at that time a Normal School, a teachers' college, Sumner Teachers' College, it was really called Normal at that time. And several of my friends, in fact most of my friends, went there to complete the two year training course for teachers in the public schools. But I went directly to the University of Cincinnati. And even though my family had very little money, I was a scholarship recipient, the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority which was very young in St. Louis at that time, it's the oldest Negro sorority in the country, supposedly. Abington was pasavis and I was Pasavis, too, at one time, which was the position of president. They did give me a scholarship and so I attended the University of Cincinnati. And, of course, I've seen St. Louis undergo many changes during my lifetime because I've lived here a lifetime. When I grew up, Negroes were not allowed to eat in any of the restaurants or attend any of the theatres on Grand Avenue, which was really "theatre row." Or be in any of the or stay in any of the hotels. There were two movie theatres that were owned by about two families, one was the Douglass and the other was the Star, the Star Theatre was downtown. They were the largest movie houses strictly for Negroes. And even though the pictures would be shown on Grand Avenue or the larger theatres when they were issued, it was many months, sometimes as long as a year, before they were shown at these theatres which catered to Negroes. And, of course, the president of the Motion Picture Owners' Association was very, very determined that the shows would remain segregated because he had so much invested, especially the owner of the Douglass. He has so much invested in the Negro theatres and he felt that this would ruin his business. Which, of course, it really has to some extent. But he fought very much against that. At the time when they began this program of trying to have the theatres open I was writing as an occupation. I had practiced writing for newspapers. And so I was city editor for the St. Louis edition of the Pittsburg Courier, which was a national Negro newspaper. And I interviewed several about this, I interviewed the Arthur brothers who were operating, or who were, I don't know, owners I guess, or had the franchise for the Missouri Theatre and for Loew's, the Loew's State, and other theatres.

RESH: These were the brothers then that went on to own the chain?

MOSBY: Arthur Enterprises, yes. And because I had worked with Maureen Arthur, I worked very closely with the National Conference of Christians and Jews, that had a program for high school youth, it was called Intergroup Youth, have you ever heard of that?

RESH: Yes, I have.

MOSBY: And I knew of Maureen, and I called her father and because they had started a pioneer sort of project, they admitted Negroes, I never shall forget this.

RESH: Now, what period was this?

MOSBY: This was around nineteen, the 1940's, it was during the forties.

RESH: During the war?

MOSBY: Yes. In fact it was, let's see, I think it was about '44. Because I think there were one or two incidents where Negro soldiers, in uniform, had gone to the theatres and had been turned away. And the, just before Thanksgiving that year, they had opened the Missouri to Negroes and we, my husband and I had gone, had attended the theatre, we weren't married at that time, but we had gone to the show. And I told several friends about it and they had gone the next day and they'd been turned away. So I called Mr. Arthur to talk to him about it and he explained that they hadn't done anything, it was just a private project and the term for the project was over. So then later on they opened the shows but it was very frustrating to know there are places that you couldn't go simply because you're colored. That was during the time, all of the time when I was in high school and elementary school, high school, and college Negroes were not allowed except in the second balcony of the legitimate theatre, the American. And then I, Mr. Walter Houston who was with Actor's Equity and he was in a play at the American Theatre, I interviewed him there about that and the some members of the Negro community picketed the American theatre for that. And he was very sympathetic, he felt it was unjust. And so there have been many instances in St. Louis that would, that have occurred in its history that really reveals the Southern inclination on the part of the well, I guess, the city fathers. Their traditions.

RESH: We talked with Sidney Redmond the other day and Mr. Redmond said that St. Louis was very much a big southern town.

MOSBY: That's what it is, yes. Sidney Redmond came here from Mississippi. And, of course, he could see, I imagine, the great similarities, you know, because Negroes were really discriminated against not so much by law as by tradition here. I was trying to think of other situations, I worked very hard in various movements to bring about more nearly equitable treatment of the, of the race to which I belong.

RESH: I have heard some references in various newspapers and heard references in conversation to a Circle Clerks or Clerks Circle movement during the 1920's?

MOSBY: Uh-huh, the Colored Clerk's Circle. That was formed to secure employment for Negroes, especially in those places of business that were largely patronized by Negroes. And

so you had this, the formation, as I said before, of this Colored Clerks' Circle and RESH: This would have been during the thirties or

MOSBY: I think it was, during the, well, yes, the thirties and probably the forties. Not so much the twenties, you see, because I really didn't come, I didn't return to St. Louis as a resident, I didn't begin teaching until 1929. And consequently this is, I recall that, so it was during the thirties and forties. In fact, the thirties, the period of the Depression, you see, and, oh, why employment for Negroes was very low, there was high degree of unemployment. And other employment as well. And consequently there was a formation of this Circle and this organization was successful in getting Negroes jobs. It preceded the formation of CORE as I recall. The Congress of Racial Equality.

RESH: Who were the guiding forces of this?

MOSBY: Well, Frank Jones was one. Now, he has died since.

RESH: Could you tell us something about him?

MOSBY: Well, I don't, I can't recall too much about him. Now, his wife and his daughter are living in St. Louis. But Frank was very active in the Colored Clerks' Circle, and, I think, I can't remember, too much about anyone else. Oh, there were a number of people, I just can't recall them, their names. Because I wasn't active in that.

RESH: Right. What about moving up to the period of the 1940's, I know a little bit about the March on Washington Movement, St. Louis had a fairly active chapter of that organization.

MOSBY: Well, Phillip Randolph came here and addressed the St. Louisans and explained about the Fair Employment Practices. . . .

RESH: Commission.

MOSBY:Commission. And what it was, the purpose of the organization.

RESH: Did you go and hear him speak?

MOSBY: Oh, yes, I knew him very well. He was a friend of mine, in fact, he is a friend of mine. And he and a group of friends, now let's see, the fellows who were very interested in that were Dave Grant, you know, Dave, who's Legislative Research Assistant to the Mayor, and McNeal, Senator McNeal, and Dave's wife Thelma, and Pearl, I can't recall her last name, but they would know her, I know her, I saw her downtown just the other day, but I can't recall her last name. But they were very active and they had a series of meeting here, and there was one fellow, Bradley, who was in the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Now, in a somewhat official capacity, I can't remember what his position was. But Ted McNeal could tell you. McNeal, and this small group, and Dave, and several others were instrumental in setting up the group in St. Louis and they were very active in that and made St. Louisians, I think, aware of the situation. And, of course, not too long after that, the Commission held a hearing in St. Louis and investigated the charges that there were, there was discrimination on the white, there were discriminatory practices on the part of those industrial concerns in St. Louis having government contracts.

RESH: How was the March on Washington Movement received by the black community? Do you think it had considerable support?

MOSBY: No, I wouldn't say considerable support in St. Louis. There was just a section of the black community that seemed to support it.

RESH: It was quite daring for the time, wasn't it?

MOSBY: Yes. But I think people were probably, I think that they were, the entire black community was certainly aware of the importance of it, the significance of it. But I think you just had a type of, you know, lethargy resulting from the fact that you feel well, nothing can be done anyway, so why try? But a sizeable group I think, was very interested in it and attempted in many ways to start, you know, the movement, to make it effective.

RESH: Could you tell us something about A. Phillip Randolph? This is a fascinating man, certainly one of the most underrated figures perhaps in the middle of the twentieth century. When did you first know him?

MOSBY: Well, I met him when he came here to speak originally, when he first came to St. Louis to speak. And he's a very brilliant man, a man of very high principle, and a man of complete commitment. Because I recall he represented the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and the story is told that one of the railroad companies had sent him, as a matter of fact, he has this unsigned, I mean this check, blank check in a picture frame hanging in his office, he did have it that time, where they had told him to write in his own figure if he would just drop his work, you know, discontinue the program. And he never, you know, never used it. Because he was completely committed to this idea of having these men treated fairly in terms of their employment, in terms of wages, in terms of fringe benefits, in every way. And so he achieved a great deal of, well, he reached a high point of, let's see now, the way I want to say this, he was recognized as an outstanding man among the Negro community. And, as I said, he was a man of integrity and he spoke, he spoke with the President and I heard him speak, I heard him speak on several different occasions and he never varied his speech in terms of the audience, he still made the same demands for, you know, equality of opportunity and

RESH: He was a tremendous speaker, wasn't he?

MOSBY: Oh, yes, he was quite an artist, indeed so.

RESH: If you have ever heard recordings of him, they are really quite worth listening to.

MOSBY: And then at that time the Pine Street Y, was, you see the YMCA's were segregated also.

RESH: Right.

MOSBY: The Pine Street Y, which was on Ewing and Pine, was a branch of the YMCA devoted to serving the Negro community. And they had a number of programs on Sunday afternoons, a series of programs in which they presented outstanding speakers or people who

were representing various causes and in that way the Negro community was made aware of many of the things that they should have known about.

RESH: Right. I can recall in some of my research in the Argus and the St. Louis American that there would be advertisements, including A. Phillip Randolph, Roy Wilkins which would be later on, also Walter White.

MOSBY: Yes, they all came to the Y to speak.

RESH: In terms of A. Phillip Randolph's support or criticism within the black community, how did the two leading Negro newspapers, the Argus and the American, how did they evaluate him? Was one more pro-A. Phillip Randolph and March on Washington?

MOSBY: I don't recall, I really don't recall. But it seems to me that they both supported him, you know. And I was writing for the paper at that time, if you get some back copies of the Pittsburg Courier, the St. Louis edition, you would find articles because I covered every one of them, of the talks. I just didn't keep the copies, you know.

RESH: Did you know many of the people on the Courier Staff in Pittsburg? Personally, did you

MOSBY: Well, I didn't know them too well, but I met

RESH: Did you ever know George Skyler, he's

MOSBY: Yes, I knew of him, I didn't know him. Yes, he is, he's an unusual person. I'm not sure that I agree with his point of view, it seems to me that he always unfortunately takes a point of view that would be diametrically opposed to that of the average black citizen, but I'm not sure about that.

RESH: Now, see, I think, if I can recall, Horace Katon's writing a column for the Courier at that time?

MOSBY: Yes, that's right. George Stafford, who was a teacher at Sumner High School and who was also the nephew of Tanner, the artist, his mother. Tanner was his mother's brother, was the editor-in-chief of the St. Louis edition. And George and I were friends and that's how I became interested in writing on it. And became city editor.

RESH: Could you tell us something about how the city edition was set up and how, I've heard, of course, that there were various editions around but how, was this printed here or was it printed in Pittsburg?

MOSBY: No, no, it was printed in Pittsburg. All of our copy was sent to Pittsburg and then we, the St. Louis edition, of course, carried the news from the rest of the country too, but it concentrated on the St. Louis news, you see.

RESH: Have back copies of that survived?

MOSBY: I don't know.

RESH: I wonder where one would go for those?

MOSBY: I think if you would write, certainly they would have it in the morgue in Pittsburg.

RESH: Uh-huh, that's very interesting, because this was certainly the Courier and the Chicago Defender and the Amsterdam News and the Baltimore Afro-American. . . .

MOSBY: Afro American, yes.

RESH: were the leading black newspapers for at least the 1930's through the forties and fifties.

MOSBY: I was trying to think of anything else. ... of course, when I grew up there were no Negroes living in this section of St. Louis, in Northwest St. Louis, you know. And they, when we bought on Enright in 1940, oh, during the Korean conflict, I guess that was around, what, 1945 or something like that.

RESH: Well, the Korean conflict would have been about '50 or '52.

MOSBY: Well, this was World War Two then. And because I think we moved over there just before just before Orson Welles gave that dramatic, I mean just after he gave that dramatic presentation, you remember, from New York, on the men from Mars, the invasion from Mars.

RESH: Let's see, that would have been

MOSBY: Wasn't that the late forties?

RESH: No, that would have been I think '38 or '39.

MOSBY: Well, we moved over there in '43.

RESH: '43.

MOSBY: Uh-huh, because I remember. We bought over there, but at that time the decision hadn't yet been made about the illegality of the restrictive covenant, it was restricted to Caucasians. The first Negro family was taken before the court and they were, Rudy Blanton, who was the wife of the purchaser, called me to tell me that they had asked, the court had asked about us. And it's interesting to note how the Negro was defined, because this is true, you see, by what your neighbors think you are, by what your friends are, about where you live, your general appearance. And that was the legal definition of a Negro. And so, but shortly thereafter. Judge Vaughn had successfully, and, of course, those that joined with him, had successfully argued the Shelly-Kramer case before the Supreme Court. And the Court had decided that restrictive covenants could no longer be enforced by the courts because they were undemocratic. But I thought it was very interesting, I remember it so well living through that period and all the qualms I suffered because we had invested our money in this very low-priced house, but the possibility that we would not be able to remain there because it was restricted, the neighborhood was restricted.

RESH: Were there any ugly incidents or anything that occurred?

MOSBY: No, not any at all. No, whites were living in the house when we purchased it and they were very anxious not to move because they wanted to remain there and I could see why they would because they had been there and they were established. And so they told me, they said, "You know, Negroes aren't suppose to live here in this neighborhood." And I said, "Well, this is one Negro who will live in this, because I've invested my money here." And they did move, they weren't too difficult to get out of the house. But they were very conscious of the fact that this was a restricted neighborhood. Well, when you look at that neighborhood now and see how, you know, at what a low level it is, and it was just an ordinary neighborhood then, you think that how foolish that was. So

ROTHER: Where did you move from?

MOSBY: We moved from North Market, 4200 North Market. We lived at what is known as the Ville most of our lives. The Ville, that's where all my relatives live. Now, the Ville is that section of St. Louis that, Ellersdville it's really called, but it's called by the inhabitants "the Ville." In which the small Negro home owners, small home owners live, they were Negroes. And the

ROTHER: That's right off of Grand?

MOSBY: No, that's in North St. Louis. It's roughly between Sarah, I guess you would say, and Taylor, and Easton, and St. Louis Avenue. In that area. Not as far over as Natural Bridge. But you had a concentration of the Negro community there and these were really people whose families had lived in that area for a number of years and most of them, as a matter of fact when I went to high school just as I said earlier, Negroes were, could go only to the one high school, to Sumner High School. And then evidentially Negroes began to move out and I remember this, too, when they moved beyond South from Easton to Evans and then to Page Avenue and then to Cook, Finney, Fairfax, West Belle, and Enright. And Enright was considered the most desirable area. This is where the Negroes who had a greater amount of money were living, were buying at that particular time.

ROTHER: Is there any reason why the pattern went southwest instead of going Northwest?

MOSBY: No, I don't know. But it did go South, I don't know why.

ROTHER: Well, I do know that that area up by the Boys' Club up there, that area only changed over in the fifties which was considerably later whereas the population you were talking about moved Southwest.

MOSBY: Moved South, yes, it did move in that direction. And then we left Enright 15 years later, which was around 1958. We had a difficult time even then finding a house because at that particular time there were still, the real estate men would not show houses in neighborhoods where you did not have at least three Negro families already living. And we went to several areas and I never shall forget going over on Shreve, there at Shreve near Lee this was a very attractive little house and I called one real estate man, I had talked to him over the phone and he agreed to show me the place because the place was listed for sale, I had seen the For Sale sign. When we got there, we got there before he did, my husband and I

rang the bell and we could hear moving inside but no one would answer the door. And so when we finally gave up and when we returned to our car, the real estate man drove up and he said that these people did not want to sell to Negroes but he felt that there was a way he could get us into the house. And my husband told him then no, that he didn't feel he would want to buy a house where people felt that way, he wasn't interested in buying it. But there were several places that we had seen where Negroes were not living in the neighborhood as yet.

ROTHER: Could you, do you remember these different areas?

MOSBY: Well, I remember that, that was Shreve, you know, well, that's in North St. Louis. And then on Penrose and, let's see, now what would that be, that would, just two blocks east of Shreve. We had tried to look at a house and they had said well this dentist, a dentist lived in one of the houses, there were very small houses, similar to the house we're in now, and he didn't want to sell to Negroes. Then all of a sudden you had the influx of Negroes into North St. Louis. And I know positively that many of these houses that Negroes bought on Highland, because that was the first major area they went into, Highland and Northland, and these were the areas in which the Negro doctors, these were the areas in which the Negro doctors invested money. They paid enough, their down payment in all probability represented the total sale price of the house, and that was just the down payment. And so it's really been difficult, you know. I mean there have been so many practices in real estate, in the banking industry in terms of lending and financing houses for Negroes which makes it very difficult. But at the present time or at least, not at the present time, I would say, but a few years ago, maybe eight or ten years ago, Negroes were interested mainly in buying houses that were fairly small. And in, in moving into neighborhoods that had houses that were fairly small because otherwise there was always a probability of their becoming rooming house districts.

RESH: I wonder if we could back up for a moment and consider your own career, your educational career. Let's see, I believe in that area we left you as an undergraduate at the University of Cincinnati, in the late 1920's was that?

MOSBY: Yes, it was. Let's see now, I finished the University of Cincinnati in 1928. And then I returned as a fellow, that is on the fifth year, a fifth year scholarship it was, a teaching fellowship, for 1929. And this was offered by the education department there. And so I taught half day and attended school half day and then I received my bachelor of education degree, degree for bachelor of arts and bachelor of education. And this is really interesting because Cincinnati was one of the few schools that offered that and I was talking with the chaplain from Washington University several years ago and he mentioned the fact that he thought this was such an excellent program. It's no longer done but it would be interesting to reintroduce it. Then I came to St. Louis and I taught at Vashon High School, I was an English teacher there.

RESH: And that had just been opened up in around '27 or '28.

MOSBY: Yes, it opened in '27, I think. Yes. And I began teaching there in '29. And I remained there, well, until 1960 as a matter of fact.

ROTHER: Do you remember any students who later became leaders or famous people?

MOSBY: Oh, my, yes. We had outstanding students in Vashon. One was, I can't remember his name, well, one more recently was Ira Dorsey who later finished West Point and we recommended, him to West Point and he is a career man with the Armed Forces. And the Henry Armstrong went to Vashon. And also Milton Holman who was with President Johnson in one of his advisory groups. He was a Vashon student. And....

ROTHER: Didn't Captain Tom Brooks go there also?

MOSBY: No, Tom Brooks was with me at Sumner. He and I finished Sumner, we were at Sumner at the same time. And there were many, in fact, I always feel safe on the streets of St. Louis because I've taught so many of the fellows who are on the police department. Ernest Troop who's I guess a sergeant, I think he is now, I don't know what he is. But he was a Vashon student. And then many of our Vashon students, Dix who has recently been appointed as one of the North, I think he's the North side administrator for the St. Louis Public Schools, he has charge of the North-side schools, he's a Vashon graduate, I taught him. And Ernest Jones who is the recently named deputy superintendent is a graduate of Vashon High School. Earl Beaks who recently was appointed as assistant principal in University City High School, he was also, and who has been an outstanding coach was also a graduate of Vashon; as well as Jody Bale who is coach.

RESH: Your experiences there then were quite pleasant?

MOSBY: Oh, yes, this was ... At Vashon, there is a tradition associated with Vashon and the students thought of Vashon in the customary way that the college student thinks of his school, the school from which he finishes. And I think this was very good because, in the first place, Vashon was built east of Grand Avenue to accommodate the growing black population in that particular area. It was one of the low income pockets in the city. And the students really came there with the idea of improving their position. And they, the faculty was completely committed to helping them. So that this school really had great meaning for them, you know, and they were greatly attached to it. And as I said, we were all interested, those of us who were on the faculty, in helping the students go as far as they could possible go. And that's why we're so proud of all of those who have done so well. Then I, in, around 1950, as I say, in 1948 I started working with the Intergroup Youth which was a project sponsored by the National Conference of Christians and Jews and by the Jewish Community Relations Council, Virgil Border and Myron Schwartz and I worked together. The idea was, the St. Louis Board of Education and the area boards of education were involved, too. The idea was there to prepare the students for an integrated educational system. And even though the Supreme Court had not handed down the '54 decision at that particular time, it seemed inevitable. And so we worked there, the American Council on Education came in and worked with us and trained us in certain techniques. And so the students were able to meet together and work together even though they were not permitted to attend a class together. And we really feel that this helped to create a climate that led to their ordering desegregation of public schools in St. Louis area, especially at the high school level. Now, as I said before, I was working for the Courier and I remember so well that several Negroes had tried to enter St. Louis University but were refused because of being, because they were Negroes. But Father Heithaus and, I can't remember the other priest, came to see, to talk to me about the writing for the paper. And Father Heithaus, as you know, is the one who led the movement to desegregate St. Louis University. It was much of his work that led to the opening of St. Louis

U. to Negroes. And they said to me at the time, they said, now I was writing about this St. Joseph High School, that's what it was, and that was connected not, it was connected with St. Ann's Church I think that was the St. Joseph High School there on Whittier and Page. You might check the name of it, I think that's St. Joseph High. But at any rate, they had one, they had sent one Negro to a seminary to prepare for the priesthood and I was writing a story about him. That's how I met these gentlemen. And they said, "Well, now, you just wait until Joe Ritter gets here. Because this educational, Catholic educational system is really going to change." And I said, "Well, is that right?" They said, "Yes, he has brought about so many changes in the place he was in Indiana, I've forgotten whether it was Indianapolis

ROTHER: Indianapolis, yes.

MOSBY: But they said, "You wait until he gets to St. Louis." And then when he, when the late Cardinal Ritter came to St. Louis, he did bring about many changes. Several of my friends who had Negro, who had children who were intellectually superior were contacted and asked to send their children to a Catholic school. And they opened the Catholic schools in that way. Now, there was much discussion because there was a group from South St. Louis which was determined that this would not happen. And maybe you read about that. And so they wrote to Washington and asked whoever represented the Church there, I can't remember what his official position was

ROTHER: The Papal Delegate.

MOSBY: Yes, the Papal Delegate. They asked him to stop Cardinal Ritter. He wasn't a Cardinal at that time. And they received the message in return that if they wanted to remain in the Church, they would have to go according to Mr. Ritter's ruling. And they could not do otherwise. And so they dropped it.

ROTHER: Did that have, did this type of change in the Church's attitude, did this have any big effect on the black community itself?

MOSBY: Oh, yes. Everybody, I think, I really think that a number of black people became interested in the Catholic Church as a result of this particular change. And I know that Cardinal Glennon was reputedly very prejudiced. Now I don't know that myself, but this is what he was reputed to be. And, consequently, when Joe Ritter came here with an entirely different attitude, the black community just became very impressed. And so, black children were admitted to these schools and if they were Catholics they were supposed to be allowed, that was Cardinal Ritter's thinking that if they were Catholics, regardless of their color, they should be permitted to attend the schools. And so the old St. Elizabeth school was discontinued and I can't remember when it was discontinued, I think it was discontinued before he came here, but there was no, there were no new schools of that same type for only Negroes established, you know, Negro Catholics. Well, then I decided, because I was interested in St. Louis University, to try to obtain a doctorate there. So in '54, well, in '54 I was a scholarship recipient from the National Conference of Christians and Jews to Stanford University. To their summer institute on human relations, and then in '55 I went to Michigan to their institute on human relations. And in '55 all the talk there was about how the Negro teachers would be displaced as a result of the Supreme Court's decision on the desegregation of public education. And, of course, it was my feeling then and I feel this way now, we all

know that when changes are made, that some people are going to suffer. But in the interest of progress you have to accept that. And, of course, it was interesting because these teachers from the South said, "Well, you can say that because you know that your job isn't threatened." And I could see how they felt, too, now in a big city. But in Missouri, in outstate Missouri, we know that there was this case, I can't remember the exact place, can you recall, where these Negroes teachers were dispossessed as a result of that. But I do know that this happened. But at any rate, I went to St. Louis University and I had worked in several programs with Father Trafford Maher, who was the director of the Human Relations Center at St. Louis University, and I talked to him about entering the program and I was admitted to the doctoral program and I received my degree there. I worked from 1960 to about 1967 with the Human Relations Center. I was a member of the Work Shop staff for the, the Campus Work Shop on Human Relations and Guidance. In fact, I was director from 1965 to 1966. So I had very pleasant experiences at St. Louis U. There was, and certainly there is, some, there are some things that happened there that undoubtedly are prejudicial and discriminatory, but I was fortunate enough not to have that experience because I was working with the Human Relations Center.

RESH: Did you have any friends or acquaintances who were trying to get into Washington University?

MOSBY: Yes, I did have. I'm trying to remember, I know Irene, her name is Irene Brown now, no, it's Irene Wright, who teaches at Harris, at least she taught this year. She was telling us the other day that she had come to Washington U. several years ago. And this is before the campus was desegregated and she had taken this, I think she was pursuing a Master's degree in Sociology with the George Warren Brown School of Social Work, that was it. And she had to live at the YWCA the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, which was downtown and ride this distance to school because she couldn't stay on the campus. Whereas, the other students who were in the program were permitted to stay on the campus. Simply because she was Negro she could not. But I think they've changed that now. In fact, I know they have. But it's interesting to note that you have this, you see the discrimination against Negroes in every area of community life, in education, in housing, in employment, in the use of public accommodations. And one thing, however, I think that's very good. I don't recall that in Missouri we've had, in fact in my studies of it, we've had any cases of the denial of a franchise to Negro citizens. As a matter of fact, I wrote my doctoral dissertation on the evolution of the protection of civil and human rights of minority groups in Missouri. And so, in terms of the judicial and statutory and legislative areas. And we haven't, I found no evidence of that at all in terms of denying Negroes the vote. But I have found evidence of discrimination in all these other fields. And, of course, I'm very proud of the fact that those who are interested in rewriting the 1945 constitution of Missouri, the 1945 or 1943, included in there that Negroes and whites must attend different schools except as otherwise provided by law, that provision made it possible to desegregate, to follow the Supreme Court's decision without any type of legislative change, you know. When the Supreme Court made that announcement, the pronouncement in May, the Attorney General immediately said, "Well, this will apply to Missouri as well." And so this made it possible, as I say, to facilitate the change.

RESH: In speaking about the general area of change, during the World War Two periods, did you notice a lot of change in St. Louis? Were there vast influxes of Negroes from the South

seeking war work from rural Missouri?

MOSBY: Yes. I didn't really, this is, this is around the area of the FEP, Fair Employment Practices. I think this was the reason for the hearing here in the St. Louis Area because there was a lot of, there were many war contracts awarded here and workers who felt that they were being denied, you see, were given an opportunity to protest the denial of employment or the denial of upgrading because of the existence of this commission. Fair Employment Practices.

RESH: What about this influx and this crush of people on, particularly on housing facilities? St. Louis had, like all major urban areas during the war, had severe housing problems. And as a consequence of this influx of people some of whom were from rural areas, I find that in some of the newspapers, the Argus for example, that there's a great deal of concern about this new group of people, that they were more lawless, that they were not as orderly, there was, the editor of the Argus expressed considerable alarm about rise in juvenile delinquency. Did it seem that way at the time?

MOSBY: Well

RESH: Juvenile delinquency I know is one of the big complaints, a rise in Negro juvenile delinquency during the Second World War.

MOSBY: Well

RESH: I don't find any statistics on that to back that up, but this is the impression one gets from reading the newspapers.

MOSBY: That's right. I can't, really can't intelligently answer that because I really don't recall feeling that way or getting that impression. I know that as a result of the large number of migrants that came here, you know, following the, trying to find opportunities for improved economic conditions, that many things, many situations arose that the older residents would, you know, feel should never have arisen in terms of behavior patterns, in terms of dress patterns, but I think that, I don't think that was confined to the black community. This is my feeling. I think that this was just a general result of the transition from a small rural agrarian community to a large urban center. And I think really many of the problems that we attributed to that population that came in, you know, in such large numbers at that time, really were could not be justifiably attributed to them. Now that is my feeling, I know I talked this over with several people and they all seem to feel that this was true. It was just a matter of being able, a period of adjustment for these people, you see, and they were having difficulties. Of course, the whites brought in their prejudices, and many of the black brought in their feelings of resentment, and here now I'm in different situation where I'm free to do and so I'll bend over backwards, you know, demanding my rights — this happens. But I think you have to understand that, some of the, I think was attributed to them that in many cases wasn't justified. Now I don't know

RESH: It's certainly true during the Second World War for any Negro-American the frustration level was especially high, over segregation in the Armed Forces, with the lynchings that were still taking place, as a matter of fact in Sikeston, Missouri, in '42 there

was a lynching, so there was all this combustible material for incidents. And probably, if one looks back at it now from the vantage point of a number of years, one would have to conclude it's surprising that there weren't race riots in St. Louis.

MOSBY: Well, you know, when you mentioned Sikeston, Sikeston is a bad word to Black-Americans in St. Louis. Because I know about four or five years ago, yes, about 1966, there was a training station up in Sikeston for, or down in Sikeston, that was carried on by a team from the University and so Mrs. Shay who was the Theel Shay who was the, Father Maker's, Associate Director of the Work Shop on Human Relations asked me to come down and talk to them about socio-metric techniques and how to use them in the class room because they were desegregated in Sikeston. They should have been, but, you know, in many of the out-state communities until recently it was just as it has always been. So I asked my husband to go with me and, in fact, I was going to receive an honorarium a sizable amount and I said, "Well, I'll give you part of that if you'll go with me." He said, "No, I wouldn't go with you to Sikeston for a million dollars." Because, you see, it has, I'm just telling you that to suggest to you how people felt about Sikeston, and that lynching in Sikeston happened many years ago but still there's that feeling. But now I went there and I stayed with the team and they were most gracious to me. In fact, I felt very comfortable. There were few Negroes in the work shop, comparatively speaking, but I didn't feel at all, you know, unhappy or as if I were being put upon. Because I was welcomed and the man at whose inn we stayed was very gracious and asked me to come back. And, of course, I guess because of the fact that I was a member of the team. But in addition to that, I spoke to several of the teachers who were in this work shop, just casually, informally, you know, and I said, "Well, now, where are the Negroes in this town?" And one I remember particularly, she said, "Well, I've lived here all my life and I don't know anything about where they live or what they do." One of the white teachers. And this seemed strange to me, you see, but there is that feeling in out-state Missouri. Now, last year I went to Cape Girardeau to talk to a government sponsored work shop and to teachers because they were in the process of desegregating, too, and Cape Girardeau's public school system is unfavorably looked upon by Negroes as well. But I had no difficulty. We stayed in one of the inns there, I took my sister and my nephews with me and they swam in the pool and everybody accepted us, you know. So I, but when we rode through, I had some of the fellows from the work shop drive me through the section of town where the Negroes lived and the conditions were absolutely deplorable. So Missouri in certain sections, especially in Mississippi County, may people say it's worse than Mississippi itself. You know, that's the bootheel section. So

RESH: What about in, we've got a few, about an inch or so of the tape left, could you perhaps tell us something about your own activities, were you a member of the NAACP?

MOSBY: Yes, I was at one time a member of the Board of Directors of the NAACP. And, that was many years ago. Joe dark, who's now an, you know, an alderman, was a member at that particular time also. And we were interested then in the same things that the NAACP is interested in now. As a matter of fact, Norman Seay, who is with the HDC, but who's very active in the NAACP and the Police-Community Relations Program, he was one of my students, I introduced him to the work in race relations. He's a graduate of Vashon High School. He is very active in the program, as I said before, in resolving some of the problems, especially in police-community problems. Then I became, I don't know why but I was busy, at that time I was writing for the Courier when I was a member of the Board of Directors.

RESH: That would have been in the fifties?

MOSBY: Yes, it was in the fifties. Because I remember I wrote about the, but this was during the period of World War Two, because I remember I wrote about the many adjustments that had to be made in community life as a result of the war effort. And people called to talk to me about it, whites, members of the white community called me to talk about it. They were pleased with the way I treated it. That's how I remember the date. But then I became, I was a member of the, this was prior to desegregation, prior to '54, the teachers in the area schools decided to form an association and we called it the Inter-group Education Association and I was a member of that. And we would talk over, teachers would get together and talk over the various problems, we had very many similar problems, you know, in teaching that if we had not worked together we might not have recognized the similarity of the problems....

RESH: The Urban League, were you

MOSBY: I have always contributed to the Urban League but I have never been a member of the Board of Directors of the League. I mean, Mr. Dark, John Dark, who was the first secretary that I remember with the Urban League, a fine man. And who, but, of course, who would be out of step with the time, with the present times. I know Mr. Douhit well.

ROTHER: Moving up towards the sixties, did you ever get involved with CORE?

MOSBY: No, I never work with CORE. Some friends of mine, the Dagens, were very active in CORE, Margaret and Erwin Dagen, you know. Erwin Dagen was the, he is the legislative, he's with housing, he was recently, you know, with the housing authority and now he's

ROTHER: Was he the one who got all that stuff thrown at him?

MOSBY: Yes, he's theme. But they've worked very hard with CORE and many times I participated in their programs, you know, like sit-ins and all like that.

ROTHER: Like Jefferson Bank, were you involved with that?

MOSBY: No, no, not at Jefferson Bank. But I did go, but Norman Seay was. And then I went to Stix I remember when they were, you know, they refused to serve Negroes. Now Negroes were spending quite a bit of money, as a matter of fact

RESH: Now, this was in 19, the summer of 1944?

MOSBY: It was sometime around there.

RESH: Yes. I think that's when

MOSBY: When

RESH: Or maybe I'm thinking of Vandervoorts, Scruggs?

MOSBY: Yes, that was Scruggs. But I went to all of those places, you know, even though, yes, Scruggs was the first one to open and that opened as a result of the March on

Washington Group in St. Louis, they were the one who were instrumental in that. And they opened their basement cafeteria. But for many years that was the only cafeteria open. They had a tea room on the, I guess it's the ninth floor, I don't know how tall Scruggs was, but Negroes were not admitted there, but they were permitted to eat in the basement cafeteria. And many people, because I remember Phillip Randolph, we were talking to him about that and he felt that if you were not permitted to eat in any of the facilities, you should not eat there in the basement cafeteria. But some others felt that this was a foot in the door, you know. And then later, Stix opened the cafeteria and, as I say, I participated in all their programs in terms of doing the things that they suggested you do. But I did not

RESH: Did you find any extremely hostile reactions from the white patrons around there, did they curse you or

MOSBY: You know, they never did. And they were always friendly with me and always struck up a conversation. I would sit and talk and I remember Negroes would pass by and look up now, and see me sitting there. And then sometimes one or two would wander in, you know, if they would feel welcome. But I never had any unhappy experiences I recall, never. Even the sales girls, you know, would say to me, or the waitresses, "Well, I haven't seen you for a long time. Why haven't you been in, you know." But I always tried to carry myself in such a way that they knew that I expected to be respected. And I wasn't going to take advantage of any situation or to do anything that was out of order. Because I think you have the obligation there, but on the other hand, I think also you have the obligation that you have the right to be respected. And I, that's what I told Mr. Arthur when I talked with him about opening the theatres. I said, "Now, you will find that a few Negroes will come out of curiosity, you know, for a while. But you won't be deluged with Negroes patrons because in the first place you prices are too high." And this has happened in many instances. Where Negroes have had, where the doors have been opened, and it's not that Negroes are going to go, but I certainly feel, and I think all other Negroes, too, thinking Negroes feel, that they have the right, they should have the right. And they will make the decision, you have the right to make the choice. And, let's see, I was trying to think if there was anything else. I really can't think of anything else.

RESH: Well, I think you've given us an awful lot, and as a sociologist and a historian gathered here, we both agree that sociology and history is people, and you have told us a lot about the black people of St. Louis, and we want to thank you very much. This is Professor Richard Resh, University of Missouri.