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Otis R. Anthony African Americans in Florida Oral History Project  
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[Transcriber's Note; Interview starts mid-sentence.]

**Jessie Moore:** —and that Negro is going to wake up. We've got to tighten up. We can't let these Negroes come in our schools and our homes; it's enough to let them come in our grocery stores and go in some drugstores and things like that. But to go in our schools, this ain't going to work.

So that black people, they didn't have sense enough to get in the movement like Martin Luther King [Jr.] and stand up and fight for what is right. But what they did, he was out there fighting, trying to get the people in these other different states and things to get together. And whereas the people down here trying to get somebody to lead them and get something together so they could make it more better here for the blacks. Well, what happened, the black people just stayed back, so the white man, he stay in power. So he tell the black man, "Say what you think, all right, you do that."

But he hollered back, "But I don't want to lose my job."

Then the white man asked him, "John, what you think about this here thing? What you think about the integration? Well, you know, they fools, they shouldn't be trying to go to white schools or try to marry white women."

The white man, he thought the black man wanted a white woman. But like I said, the black, he don't want no white woman; all he want is the right to get good jobs, go where he want to go, and be respected, just like the white man. But the white man, he don't see it like that—but a lot of blacks saw people in the same way, and they won't stand up for what's right. If Martin Luther King come down here, the black people would have did just like they doing now.

**Rosa Moore:** Right now. Standing and looking.

JM: Standing and looking. They stand up, they holler. I go around the neighborhood and say, "I'm gonna get five hundred. We gonna go down there to the courthouse, we gonna talk to the mayor, we gonna tell the mayor we want some help for this black woman that burn out or something."

You know what they'll tell me or tell you? "I ain't gonna get involved." And that's bad.

So black Tampa, when I first come here, things is just a little better. Why's it a little better? Because the young generation is coming up. You take when my father was coming up and when I was five and six and eight and ten years old, they can't do the things now that they did back in them days. What it is, if the black people don't stand up and help us, it's just bad.

Even when I was looking for a job—right now, say the war time. I want a job. The first thing they looking for, you might get a job (inaudible), you in the union. Next thing, he ease up to you, say, "You got to give him five dollars, ten dollars to buy me some liquor, now (inaudible)." That's bad.

RM: That's going on right now.

JM: Right now, that's bad. Here's a man here, you join the union, you got a card, you just as respectable as he is. I'm his cousin, you his cousin, that person, he's his cousin—he can't go to work. They'll let one or two men work from now on, make all the money. But they don't look back and think about the other little men in that union, that card, they got families too. They pay the same thing, \$125 for a card. I don't need all the other jobs around here, the black people, it's just bad to say. You take a big job, put a black man over it, he's the owner, that white man's nothing. "John, I want my job to go right." Say he got fifty white men out there and three black men.

RM: Tell him about your job with IMC.

JM: Hell put some hurt on the black people; they got to do twice the work of the fifty white men. You know why, because he's the black foreman and he'll try anything, to show off to the white man to keep his job—but he ain't doing nothing but hurting his self, hurting his family. So it's just bad.

At IMC, I was running a fruit crew for them. This white man come out there give me \$4,000 or \$5,000 a day to pay these guy off. So I wouldn't work these people, take their fruit and stuff them—like a lot of fruit growers, tell us it would hold ten boxes but actually they hold fourteen or fifteen. I know when they got ten boxes in there, so I marked it with crayon and wouldn't let them put no more than ten in it. So I was saving them labor and money, I was cutting the workman off from getting rich from their labor and his money he was taking home.

On Sunday, they didn't want to work, so I tell them, "You don't want to work on Sunday,

don't work on Sunday. That's the agreement. I don't care what the man said, I'm the boss and you won't work."

This cracker told me, "Why didn't they work yesterday?"

I said, "My men don't work on Sunday."

So he said, "I'm going to give you this money, but next time them niggers don't want to work, you beat their ass and make them go to work." That's what that cracker told me.

I bopped him. I took the money and said, "Well, I'll tell you what you do. The next time, I'm going to come get you and I'm going take you down there to beat their ass." So the cracker looked at me like I was a fool.

I worked three days and I told the men out there with me, "I want you all to pick all the fruit you can pick. I'm going to pay you all up, and I ain't picking no more." I told the men what was happening, women and men. I said, "I don't like the way this man think that he take me to use you all for him. I can't do that, so I quit the job."

The man, he come to my house every day, beating on my door, trying to get me to go back to work. He lost money, so he had to go out of business. I saw him up there at those apartments. You know what he told me? He said, "You the smart nigger, (inaudible) I can make them do anything I want them to do."

I told him, "No it wouldn't have. Where I come from the black man, he is respected. If you don't respect him, he'll fight." But see, you take the black people here in Florida, I don't know what's wrong with them.

RM: Before you got the job, they were slaves.

JM: That's right. The man was doing them any kind of way.

RM: It was seventy-three [1973] or seventy-four [1974].

**Herbert Jones:** Seventy three [1973] or seventy-four [1974]?

JM: You know what I mean. They'd get out there and work, maybe they made fifty dollars. This black dude, him and a white man get together. If they made fifty dollars they be (inaudible). Threaten, say you owe me one hundred dollars, you owe me fifty dollars, you got to come to work. Go to your house and get you to come out and work. See what I mean? And the black people just stand there and said nothing. I said, "Stand up," but they said, "I don't want to die." But for my rights I know I'm right. I'm willing to die, I'm going to stand up for my rights. But the black people just ain't going to stand up.

And you take right now the black man on Sundays. He go in town, him and his wife ain't bothering nobody. He got his car, he just out riding, sightseeing. Here come the law, the

law stop him. And he ain't done nothing. Police stop him, say you going this, say he give you a ticket. You know you ain't did nothing. You go down there and pay a big fine. You're black, you lose in the court. In front of Judge [Don C.] Kilgore. You got a ticket, say the man give you a ticket. You know you ain't did nothing; he give you a ticket and say want twenty-five dollars. You know you ain't did nothing; you ain't going pay the twenty-five dollars down there at the admitting desk. You going to want court, so to prove you innocent.

You go to court, the judge calls you up there in front of him, he asks you how you plead and you say, "Not guilty."

He says, "Well, you not guilty, you come back week."

You set up another court date. All right, you go back to court. You know you ain't guilty. You go back to court and there's the officer. The officer says, "Well, this man was running sixty miles an hour in a ten mile an hour zone." He come this way, beating you. Now how can he say that you is running that fast if he ain't got no way to clock you?

All right, the jury says, "Well, I'm going to charge you \$300."

You say, "Well, Your Honor, I ain't got no money to pay \$300."

"I don't care where you get it from; the fine is \$300, so we give you a week to get it up here."

You go back up there and tell him—your week up—say, "Your Honor, I ain't got but \$50."

"Lock that boy up."

But here's a white man. A white woman. They have a wreck, knock down telephone posts (inaudible) He comes up there, she comes up there.

"How do you plead?" Not guilty. All right, come back to court. He fined them two five dollars.

And the black people still go on, and they know it goes on and they don't do nothing about it. And like I said, if the police is right now, they back off. I know places right now the police is backed off to here, they don't bother the white people.

Right down here on Sligh [Avenue], they back off and hide. On Lake [Avenue] and Fortieth Street they back off over there and hide. On Fiftieth Street down there by the washerette where Fifteenth [Avenue] and Seventeenth [Avenue] run, they back off in there and hide. Would believe they waiting on—they don't wait on the white men, they wait on the black men. On Hillsborough [Avenue] and Thirtieth [Street], over there in the parks over behind that Brother John's and hide. But they don't get no white people, they

get all black people. They get behind the barbershop over here on Thirtieth and hide. They get over there by this church on Hanna [Avenue] and get up on the check pocket and sit back there and hide. Behind the hospital and hide and they don't get nobody but the black men.

You pull up to a stop sign, you stopped. Okay, a car coming and you stopped, you pull out, and the man, he say you run a stop sign. A wreck happened right up here before they put this light up, they had a four way stop sign. A white women, she deliberately run the stop sign, cause the man that was in front of me, it was his turn to pull off. He pulled off, I eased up. She was coming down Hanna and she run that stop sign and hit that man. You know who get charged? The black man for running a stop sign. The man told me, the officer told me, "I ain't got nothing to do with it." Right up there on the corner there, a four way stop sign up there. And I raised so much sand and argued and raised so much sand they finally got a light up there, on Hanna.

All right, accidents been happening out there on Sligh where they come out on Sligh down there. They need a light bad, they done had four or five wrecks. Now the police park up there by the 7-Eleven down there at Sligh, where that street come out by the 7-Eleven. You know it's bad coming out there at 4:30 or 5:00. If you spin your wheels, a car coming both ways up Sligh, and you get there and you figure you got a car just enough to get out there. And you spin you wheels, you got a ticket for reckless driving. You will sit there all day long if you don't take them chance and try to get out there.

Like I said, it's bad. The black people know all these things happening in Tampa and they won't do nothing about it.

HJ: What do you think about politics in Tampa? Especially black politics.

JM: Bad. It's bad. All right. Black politician people, they know what's happening. They won't do nothing about it. They'll sit back, because no way they're getting the cards on the table. You take the black people in the politics, they know what needs to be done in this city, they knows what needs to be done for the black people but they don't mention it. Right now—it's bad to say but it's a true fact if we had a black mayor, a black sheriff's department—you know, the black people, they don't stick together.

If we had a black mayor, he'd be just like the white mayor, because if two or three black people went down there, he'd say, "Well, we're going to do something for you," and it'd never get done. Same with that Moses White. He could do a lot for the black people, you know what I mean. Jones, he could do a lot for the black people. And there's a bunch of black people around here, but they just don't do—you know what I mean, they don't do. You see them on the street. Alton White, he's assistant mayor. You see him on the street, he walk by on the street, he looking at you like you trash, you hear me? He look at you like you trash.

RM: They don't take time to find out what the black people need. What they need and what do they want. They don't come around in your neighborhood and visit and ask,

"What can we do to better your conditions?" They don't know if you don't get out there and say something. People has called Alton White, they talk with him, because the mayor—you can't never get him, he's always got some kind of campaign going. He don't have time to talk to you.

JM: When [Dick] Greco was the mayor, he was up there, he'd take me and lot of more black people. Then people tell you you couldn't see him. I said, "Well, I'm going to see him." I'd wait on him and he'd come. I'd see him. He'd sit down and he'd talk with you. You tell him, "Look here, we need some (inaudible)," he say, "Well, I don't know can I do it but I'll try. You check with me later." Well, now, there's black people up there in a position with those people, and you always get to them.

HJ: How would you characterize Reverend Lowry's politics?

JM: Well, I'd just class him with all the rest of them. Moses White, Ephraim White and just like put him the same way with the man—now he gone—Reverend Tard. Reverend Tard, he was a big man in this town, he was a big man. I went around his house and give him my last money, both his legs cut off, his wife working in an old folks home and his sons (inaudible). He did so many people wrong, you know what I mean. He was supposed to be a big man, he mistreat people, but all that didn't come out, it was just one of them things. The black people, when they get in power, they don't think about the little people, they just bad.

Same way about President Carter. He claimed he was going to do so much for the blacks. He's just like the black people. Black people ain't going to do nothing, and he's the same way. So the first thing they holler about the president ain't doing this here, the president ain't doing that. But what do they do? They could make him do them things if they'd get together and try to get them going. Now look at the farmers, the coal miners, they stood up for what they believed in.

But the black people now—you take all over the whole world, there's more black people than is in any other nation that is. If all the black people, or just half the black people, would stand up for what's right, they'd get anything they wanted, but they won't do that. That's the whole thing in a nutshell. They figure they just got so much fear, but like I said, the white man done fooled them all so many years and got them scared. Black people telling about ghosts and this different things, and about—my mama used to tell me about Santa Claus, and have me scared of the bogeyman, the sandman, you know what I mean.

But from the beginning, if them parents of ours just put it on the line to us like it was, we would know what to look for and we'd been able to protect ourselves. But they didn't, and I feel still, (inaudible) and the black man. That's just our way of going. You get out there and—right now I get out there on the job. I work hard. I see them mistreating a man. He won't stand up for what's right, I'll stand up for what's right. I try to tell him. I lost a lot of jobs standing up for black people. But what good does it do? They laugh at me. "Nigger, you was a fool. I still got my job." Yeah, I was a fool. See what I mean, trying to stand

up, but it don't do no good.

See, you take Martin Luther King, when he started that boycott and none of them blacks ride bus. Now, there was a lot of blacks that wasn't with him. But he had a lot of black backers. Well, now, if them black people, all the black people, had been real and together, King wouldn't have died. They wouldn't have had a chance to get him.

RM: A lot of stuff wasn't told. As long as the white man has got (inaudible) set up by a black man, because a black man among his leaders—the ones that he thought was his leaders—reported to the white man every move that King made, and they knew that he was going to be in (inaudible).

JM: (inaudible) King was coming for about thirty seconds and that was (inaudible) come at 12:00 that night, and do you know when we got to St. Augustine?

RM: See, because the picture they showed on TV was not the truth.

JM: They showed what they wanted to show.

HJ: What you were saying about Malcolm X now?

RM: You see how they killed Malcolm X. There wasn't anything else about it. He was a black man, he was involved. And happened, the white man, this the thing, the white man knowed Malcolm before Malcolm got his first X. You know Malcolm went to prison, he couldn't read or write. He learned how to read in prison; he was a dumb man. Malcolm, he got out, he had gathered all that knowledge together. And like he told King, he said, "You believe in non-violence. If it take violence, use violence."

So the white man knowed Malcolm was in power and he had a lot of vigilantes behind; they would do anything he said to do. So the white man messed around there and got what you call a connection in there with some black to find out anything he wanted to know on Malcolm and what went down. So Malcolm was killed and that was the ballgame; you didn't hear nothing about it.

See now, to me he was greater than President Kennedy, and Luther King was to me the same way. You know, we lost just as much, in a way, as the white man. So we lost—the world lost Kennedy, but the black people, they lost everything when they lost King. So that's the same way about Malcolm X and, in a way—now you take the Mafia, the mob like the Muslims. A lot of things, them people still want to fight the law like Malcolm X did, because he knowed he was a man and when he stood up for what was right. Well, now, if it wasn't for the mobs and the Mafia, and the Italian and Spanish and Cubans and different things, and some of the black people in that Mafia. The black race will be wiped out like Hitler did to the Jews, see what I mean. But now if the white man could do that, he'd do it. But know there's so many people going to fight and he knows a lot of men will fight, so like I said, he got fear in all the rest of them.



So if King, what he fought for was right, but if he listened to Malcolm X and fought violence with violence like the white people do to him, the black people wouldn't be back they are, they'd have let the white people know we'd fight. You see how the white people beat the black people down in the streets, in Tennessee, up there in Alabama and Georgia, St. Augustine. It just was bad, you know what I mean? And the black people, like I said, when they killed Malcolm X, when they killed President Kennedy, all you could hear, look how long he's been dead. They trying to find a way to make black (inaudible) he fight. (inaudible) to find out why King died or how they got to him to kill him, and how Malcolm X went down, but they digging hard to try to find how Kennedy died. How that boy got a chance to kill him. (inaudible) or find out where to look for him.

You just look at that thing, and the first thing they holler about, "We doing all we can for the black people." The president, he get up there, "I'm going to make it possible for so many jobs for the black." But what good is he making them jobs? There's 200,000 black people don't have no education. What would he look like going on one of the them big computer jobs and he don't know? Make a way for him to learn. But they don't do that. The first thing he holler—and then again they make them jobs, they put a black man up there over the jobs. Then when a black man come, there's another black man come up here if you qualify. He don't care; there's so much red tape you ain't going to get the job. There's a white man come up there, can't read his name that's as big as that television, he got the job.

HJ: Another thing we're interested in—now about this shipyard. We hear so much about that.

JM: Well, it's bad. Like I was telling the man up at the laundromat. Shipyard bad. You take the black people, it pays good money. They got black foremen, they got about four now, maybe a little more, but about three or four. The foreman, he's black. They have a black man get out there on those bunko ships, bunko tanks and all that, he's got to go down there and get wet and muddy and greasy.

But you know, if he were a white man, they don't be doing that. You don't see a white man down there doing that, when they sandblasting them ships. You know why you don't see them doing that? Cause they got the black man up there, he's what you call the foreman, and he keep the white man from doing it now when they repair the ships. When they had this white guy was over the union hall on Twenty-Second Street down there—I can't think of his name now, but he's dead. A black man didn't have a chance.

But they got a black president down there now. You can go down there and they give you all kind of run around. If you think I'm driving, you go down there right now. He treats the blacks so bad it just makes you cry. But when the white man was there, the black man had a chance. But they put that black man there, he sitting up there laughing. That white woman called Grace, she be laughing and grinning.

You come in there and ask, "Can I get a job this morning?"

She say, "Go over there and sit down; if [there's] a job, we'll call you."

But a white man come up there and ask, she say, "You want to go and see about a job." They don't ask you if you want to go see if there's a job, he send you to that job. So, that's the way it goes.

In the shipyard, since he over that too, it's just one of them things. You go out to the shipyard out there, you get a job from four to one, black don't like you out there. You got the white tell the blacks there's so and so over there, he think he smart. You know what they tell you? They lay you off, you go draw compensation. "When the work start back, we'll give you a call." They be hiring men every day, you ain't did nothing to get laid off. You tell me that white boy going out there, same way about that. Same way about that International Longshoreman [Association] down there, they just as prejudiced as the white man.

HJ: Tell us something about that.

JM: All right. When the fruit season come, they have them sign up (inaudible). Perry Harvey Junior—he's the president now; the way he comes to be president is bad. James, he was the vice president when old man Harvey [Perry Senior] dies. So James supposed to have stepped up. I can't think of his last name right now, but he was the vice president.

So they were going to have a vote for the president, but they wasn't supposed to have a vote for no president, James was supposed to have stepped up and the next man who was in the line behind him was supposed to have been the vice but it didn't happen that way. So Perry Harvey, down there working at that welfare place down there, stepped in and got to be the president.

So I went in there and I wanted to know who was the president that next morning, so James told me, "Well, I'm not the president. Perry Junior's president."

I said, "Man, this just can't be."

He said, "He's president. Shortly was supposed to be the shop steward. Shortly was supposed to be over me and everything, but he ain't." The old man was taking money under the table, so he doing the same thing.

Then the strike formed. The waterfront ain't never paid off a strike form until 1971; that was the first strike since the union was organized.

*pause in recording*

HJ: —and you can go back and tell us the same information that you told us.

RM: Like when I came from. Up there where I'm from—Paoli, Pennsylvania—there wasn't very much that the blacks had as far as education. There was only one school that

would accept blacks, and that was the one in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, which was a one room school and had grades from one to seven. High school was out.

My grandfather, he did a lot of fighting to get the children into a high school that was located in Wayne, Pennsylvania. He had to go to Philadelphia, because that was the closest NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] to get help to bring back to this little town to help them fight to put the black children in to that school. Well, during the time they were doing all that fighting we were eligible for high school, but we couldn't enter, so we had to be placed from different towns that would accept blacks, which [was how] I came to Florida.

Well, my mother sent me here to Florida—this was in 1965. My mother sent me here and I completed my grades at Moton [High School, Brooksville, Florida], and then I went to Bethune [Cookman College] for two years. Then I quit and married my husband and I never went back. I had the credits but I never returned.

Then I got involved in the neighborhood affairs. I seen that people were being mistreated and abused so I developed. I got around. I walked around and got all the neighbors together and tried to show them how they could help one another. Well, they were afraid of the white man; they were afraid of their jobs if their names was used on any kind of a paper or citation that we'd drawn up. So it was really a hard thing for me to do on my own, but I still followed through—like people being evicted because of they're out of work and nowhere to go, and the rent man was only interested in what he could get out of them. They wouldn't fix the sinks, the floors had holes in them, rats was running in; that was dangerous for the baby. It was just real bad, it was a ghetto that nobody cared to do that. My husband and I, we lived there.

So, after that, all these riots began—these fights—which brought into my husband. Him and a group of fellows got together to try to take to the black people, to not to tear up what we have, go to the head and argue and fight. "Don't fight our own people because they didn't have no more than we had." And they was slapped down by the officials.

So my husband got involved with the mayor. He talked with the mayor, and he told the mayor that something had to be done about Central Avenue and the harassment that the black people are getting from the whites. Because they are murdering our children and they are being suspended and they are calling it justifiable homicide. That's not true, because I myself have witnessed a boy being killed, and there was nowhere else for him to go and they didn't have to kill him. They could have shot him in the leg, but they chose to kill him. That was the family we were talking about.

This woman, she has about four children. One of her sons she sent to Miami. Well, he had a good job up there, but he was laid off so he came home. He married a girl up there that had two children. It was a robbery had taken place, see, and he fit the description of this fellow that they were looking for that was known to live on Oak Street at the time. Well, we lived there and we knew this fellow hadn't been here that long, and they picked him up. The man identified him as being the man that robbed him, but that wasn't true,

because the man had only been here two days and the robbery occurred a month ahead of that time.

Okay, the boy had done something which I never did find out, and he was afraid that his wife would put him in jail for nonsupport. So that's what he thought the police was after him about. He ran out of the bar, it was on the corner of Palm Avenue and Central, he ran out of the bar and he ran towards the church. There was a church on the corner of Oak and Central. But there was nowhere else for him to go, because the interstate was there and there was a high fence. He never would have scaled that fence before they caught him and that's where they hemmed him up and shot him because he was running. He was an innocent man, he never was in on the robbery; he knew nothing of the robbery.

So we all got mad and his mother—well, they pushed us all back. They told us to go home and they were not involved in it, and I said, "No, I'm not going anywhere, because I witnessed this." They take my name and everything, and when the inquest came up, they didn't call no one. I saw in the *Florida Sentinel* about two weeks ago that the policeman that shot this boy had been justified and that wasn't right. Even though it was the wrong fellow, they said, "Why did he run?"

He ran because of fear. The law puts fear in the hearts of the black people because they know whether they stand or run, they going to be hurt either way. They have no fight. Yet, right now the law stop you for driving for no reason. He wants to give you a ticket on general principal. A lot of fellows, they have work and they have families and they can't afford insurance. They have a perfect driving record. What do they do? They take their license away from them.

Mostly what I have done since I been here is try to help our fellow man. I have gone to places, I've been slapped down, abusive language been used towards me, but I still go. I still stick in there, because why give up now. We really need a leader. We need someone right here in Tampa. Tampa is worse, and it's getting worse because in St. Petersburg, those people are joining together, and here you have no cooperation. They won't fight for what belongs to them. We always going to step down and let the best man go forward. How do we know if we're not good if we're not given a chance?

That's why I try to tell these people. Fight for what you believe in. If you fear your job, there's another job somewhere. "I've been on my job too long to try to start anything." I say, "If you don't, what about your child that's coming up? Fight for her, so when she get where you are, she can be in a better position." Well, they don't want to cooperate.

I asked all these people about this park. You see how bad that park is; it's really dangerous and there's some little children around here. You know what they tell me: "I don't have time to get involved. You home all day, why don't you do it?" But I can't do it by myself.

All right, after I talked to you and I talked to the commissioner one more time, what they do? They start it. And you see what done now, they stopped again. They dig a little hole

and they fill it in, and then they go somewhere else. Why not complete it, put a fence up and then whatever you want to put on the inside—put it on there, but put the fence up first, or at least part of the way to protect the children.

Summer is coming, school is going to be out. Thirtieth Street is a race track, now where is there any protection for your little ones? This lady—her children is six and ten—next door here her little girl is about nine. When they're playing ball, they don't pay no attention to no car. The ball rolls right out there on Thirtieth Street and there you are.

If these people would help me, I believe they would stay there until they finished complete that park. They had bulldozers over there last week—now this week, nobody showed up. You go down there and you sit and you talk with the commissioner or anyone in the high places and you sit and they ask you, "Is anybody else complaining?"

I say, "Yeah, all the neighbors are complaining."

"Well, you have to bring in names for us to do anything about it. Just one person, I believe you is a troublemaker."

I said, "[If wanting] to protect the lives of children is being a troublemaker, then I'll be one." That's what I told them.

Okay, the next person—I try to get these people like the man next door. He had the darndest time. Yeah, he drinks and sometimes he be sick, and he needs his driving privileges. He had one accident and they took his license away for a year. I had to help him get them back. I said, "The man needs them to drive to the hospital; he's an outpatient at the VA. If you don't want him riding around the city, give him a permit—enough to take him to the hospital and bring him back without being stopped every time he turned the corner." He was definitely being harassed so much when he drove his car that he stopped, and it's just been about a couple of months ago he started back.

This judge, I can't—I don't know. This Kilgore, he's got to get out of there, because the picks the poorest people to pay the highest fines. Now, a man that's living alone and maybe making \$200 or \$300 a week, he got a twenty-five dollar fine. A black man come up there making \$125 a week, he got a \$500 fine. Where's he going to get it from?

So this fellow, I'm doing everything I can to help him, because he's really in bad shape. The man got hurt on his job. His boss refused to send him to the hospital in an ambulance. He did something to his back. He made him drive the truck home all the way from Lakeland; he nearly had an accident because he couldn't straighten up. He got home, he laid in bed a whole week before his boss come to find out what was wrong with him. When he did find out, he sends him to a medical doctor, and the medical doctor told him there was nothing he could do for him because he needs a bone specialist. They sends him back home, he suffers, he messed around and got an attorney.

The people that got the attorney for him told the attorney that he was ignorant; he didn't

know how to read and he didn't know how to write. They said, "If you explain anything to him, he still won't know what you're talking about, so you're going to have to get his wife and explain to her so she can explain to him." The lawyer build up in his mind that he's got a fool on his hands, so they'll use him and he don't understand. Some things he can read and some things he can't, but [that] isn't a reason to abuse him.

The lawyer knew he was a fool. Somebody told him that he could get \$40,000 to \$50,000 out of his accident on the job. Well, he built that up in his mind, that's what he could get. So when he went to his lawyer, these people did this to him—the one that got the lawyer for him—had told him what could happen and that he didn't have to have no operation, no nothing—just played on his ignorance. So when they put him in the hospital, he went in and had the operation, so he came out. They messed around with him, sending him back and forth to the doctor and the doctor said there wasn't nothing wrong with him.

All of a sudden knots and things began to form in his leg, then his lawyer sued for him. Told him, "Mr. Norris, we'll give you \$5,500, but if I were you I wouldn't take it." So he decided not to take it. He's still walking around suffering. They cut his compensation off because they said he was lazy and didn't want to go back to work after he wouldn't accept the \$5,500. Just before Christmas they called him and told him that they would give him \$3,000 and that's all. His lawyer told him, "No, don't take that, hold out." He went to a hearing, and the insurance company told him they don't think that he's entitled to any more money.

He's still in bad shape. I told him, "Oh, no; they might do that to some cracker but this is one time they won't. I was telling the flashy lawyer and everybody else I could get my hands on, all over the newspaper, cause they can't do you like that." They won't give compensation and they won't so much as pay for his medicine and he's in bad shape. All right, he thought his wife was going to stay there and help him. They went to the last hearing on February fifteenth, they told him, "We feel as though we have given you enough money and compensation and medical bills to pay for your injury, and I don't think the insurance company should give you any more."

The judge, he asked Paul, "Do you have to necessarily walk with that cane?" and he said, "Yes, Your Honor, because my whole body is in pain and in knots, like blood clots all over his leg." He laid there and suffered these things with no doctor's attention. So the judge sent him to a doctor and he said, "We won't settle this case until you see another doctor." Guess what they sent him to, another medical doctor. What can he tell him; that's not even his field. He give him some medicine to take for the knots' he said they come from not moving around, caused by muscle strain or when he get up and try to walk after staying in bed so long, what else can a man do?

I told Paul, "Listen, they're going to call here when they get ready for that hearing, but we're going to ready for this, because me and my husband will pay for you to go to a doctor and for you to get an x-ray. Now, we're going to take that x-ray to this hearing because they think they're going to settle it, but they're not because we'll have another x-ray ready for them."

Do you know what his attorney told him? "If you can get somebody to help you to get more evidence, maybe I can do something."

Didn't he tell him that? I say, "Is that so? Okay Paul, we going to do something about it. Do all you can do. If you swell up in the knots, I got a doctor that's going to examine him, and he's going to send in a report that he's a number one outstanding doctor, Dr. Holm."

JM: The man's got a kid, and the kid is no help, and he ain't able to work. It's just bad. The only help he gets is from us and the other CBs [Citizens Band radio]. I go around and talk to the other CBs on the radio, and that's the same way about the old people out there. People just done forgot about them.

RM: Now, he's really being refused. You don't have these many hearings and depositions, not in a lawsuit, because if you mess around, it's over two years and the limitation is going to run out on him. Like the judge told him, this case should have come up four months ago. Well, see, the lawyer kept pushing it back because he seen that he done made a fool out of Paul, and he's got as much money as he could get out of the case. He figured it could come up anytime; he'll work on somebody's case that's going to bring him some money.

I told them something. Paul called his attorney, and he'd tell him, "I'm not in." He called the secretary, she don't give the lawyer the message. For two weeks around here he was trying to get a hold of his attorney. I say, "You call the judge, you got a letter with the judge's name on it, the last deposition you had?" He said yeah. I said, "Bring it to me, I'll get hold of the judge."

The judge called his attorney, and I don't know what he said to him, but it wasn't two minutes and the attorney called me and told Paul, "You didn't have to call the judge. If you need anything, you could have called me."

He said, "Well, Mr. Levins, I been trying to get you for two weeks."

I went and talked to another attorney and had him investigate Mr. Levins to see just what was wrong, why were they doing Paul in that way. I say, I feel he is being misrepresented," and he says, "Do you have any proof?"

I say yeah. He say, "What proof?"

I say, "I have proof that his client has been trying to reach him for two weeks. During the time before that, he'd go down to his office and he'd tell him he didn't have time to see him. He's his attorney, he's supposed to take time—even if it's after hours, take time."

JM: If he was a white man, he'd take time to see him.

RM: So now he got a boy going to school that's barefooted, no income. Okay, I sent him

down to the neighborhood service center and they offered to pay the light bill and the water bill, but as far as welfare, they said under the circumstances of the way he was hurt disqualified him for welfare. Can you imagine that? I said, "What is he supposed to feed his son?" They give him a slip to go out here on Florida Avenue to get two bags of groceries, just all canned goods. That's no good for him. I said, "Well, couldn't you give him a check to help him get some meat or something from a supermarket? Canned goods and rice is all right, but you can't cook beans with water without some kind of bacon or something."

She said, "Well, I'm sorry but we can't do that."

I wouldn't leave that neighborhood service center, because there was a white woman in there and she was from California—so help me Jesus, they wrote that woman a check for Winn Dixie [Grocery Store]. They did that, down in Ybor City. I don't know if that woman was—I got a paper in a pocketbook—was it Miss Dixon, a social worker?

JM: She wouldn't help this other girl and she had kids.

RM: Yeah, I even took a woman down there, they wouldn't help her; they said the only thing they could do for her—her husband was abusing her, and he hit her over the head with something and split it so they brought her here. I tried to get her on welfare, and finally I did get her on welfare, but it took me four months, plus they wouldn't give her no help in the meantime.

Now that show you how much help the black people have, they have no pool. A man lying there, he's injured, no money coming in, no more than what the people get up and give him, and he's got a long time to go like that because they was supposed to have a hearing this month and they put it off until next month, the nineteenth. He still won't be able to take the money because if they decide to give him any, but from where it looks, I don't think he's going to get anything. But yeah, he was hurt on this white man's job, trying to do his job.

JM: He's a black man, that's the problem. He ain't got nobody to stand behind him and help blacks. That's the whole situation.

RM: Well, we going to push this thing and you might wind up seeing it in the paper because I really think this is wrong; it's really wrong.

JM: You take the state of Florida, the government and the brother, he's the same way. He'll jump up and spend \$50 million to build a missile. What good when people here are starving? They take all their money and give it to foreign countries over there. Why should you let your country go hungry and feed another country and make them strong to fight you?

RM: You got to look at this. Our people try to get homes. They fought for their country, they died for their country, go try to buy a home on the GI bill, and they make too much



money or they don't make enough. But yet they're not entitled to the veterans benefits. You don't hear about that about the white man now. He can be making \$1,000 a week, but he qualifies for everything.

JM: Look what happened to me. This was a man needed help. I didn't have no credit but I know the white people. I went down there and I can borrow as high as \$25,000 right now. They ain't got half—they got twice as much as I had, and they go down there and they say, "We can't help you." Because this white man called down there for me, well, I got helped just like that. Now this man got a home, it's paid for, he goes down to the bank and try to borrow \$1,500, and you know what they told him? They couldn't loan it to him. There's a white man come up there and borrow \$11,000 up at the Seminole Bank. They asked him what did he have, he said, "I got a car and a house." That was all. This man had a tractor, a car and they wouldn't let him have \$1,500.

You take the black people right now, got money—if you go to them and say get something together here to help the blacks, to help the children, to help the poor, the old people, they look at you like you something crazy; they going to laugh at you. But see, you take the senior citizens here, you take a woman on Social Security and she's getting a little disability about \$589 a month. She got to pay the rent, she got to buy food, you see how she living and they won't help her. You can just imagine how many people here in Florida, black people—I ain't talking about the white people—that's living like that. And the white woman, she pull up in a Cadillac or Lincoln at a grocery store and buy \$500 worth of groceries with food stamps, her husband's working making \$500, \$600 a week—and there's this black man, working his hands down to the bone, he's got four or five kids, and he can't get no help. What makes it so bad, them in power up there, they knows them things happening.

HJ: When you all came here, when you first came here, what was the condition of blacks? How was they treated? Did they stick their own conditions or what?

JM: Well, this is the way it was. You take Tampa, Tampa used to be on the boat a long time ago—but who in Tampa made it all that but the blacks in Tampa? The Italians and the Cubans, they had it made. You take Central Avenue and Nebraska, they run half of that down there. There was a few blacks that had a little money—like Henry John and Moses White, they had a little grease—but what they was doing, now the blacks, they had twix and between them, the white man was still above the black man and the black man had to do what the white man said. When the Negroes went to stand up for their rights, what they thought was right like Martin Luther King, his movement started getting in power like it should, well the white man went to waking up, he was saying, this black man here after a while, this black man get into power—

*end of interview*