## Lois Freeman, 2008

*Khadija Hassan:* We'd like to thank you for letting us interview you for the crossroads project. Can you please state your name for us?

*Lois Freeman:* You're gonna have to speak a little bit louder.

*Khadija Hassan:* I'm sorry. We'd like to thank you for letting us interview you for the crossroads project. Can you please state your name for us?

*Lois Freeman:* Lois A. Freeman.

*Khadija Hassan:* When is your birth date?

*Lois Freeman:* I'm sorry?

*Khadija Hassan:* When is your birthday?

*Lois Freeman:* 10-28-21. I am now, I'll be 87 this fall.

*Khadija Hassan:* Okay. Can you tell us about the location where you were born and raised?

*Lois Freeman:* Well, I would say early on, upper middle class. My dad owned his own business in Knox – I was born in Knoxville, Knox County Tennessee. Then the Depression came along and he lost his business, and so he went and became and accountant. Started working as an accountant, and we moved to a little town in upper East Tennessee called Irwin in Tennessee, (name)_ County, and that's where I grew up.

[1:08]

Went to high school and then I went to college. Tennessee Wesleyan College and the University of Tennessee and then University of Memphis.

*Khadija Hassan:* Can you tell us about your occupation?

*Lois Freeman:* Well, I started out in secretarial work, but after I started back to college, and we had only job training in the government job that I was in, and I was, I guess, about 20 years, my latter part of my career, I was in personnel management. So in order to get a staffing position, I went back to college.

And when I retired, I was working as a consultant, a personal staffing we did staffing for the largest federal agencies in the state of Tennessee for a number of positions.

[2:15]

And as a staffing person, I had a certain block of positions assigned to me, and then we also had what they call collateral assignments. And my collateral assignments for most of that tenure were affirmative action under the equal employment opportunity act.

And during that period, you know, the federal women's program came about, and I was the federal women's program coordinator, and then I was the handicapped coordinator. We had a very strong program for hiring the handicapped.

*Khadija Hassan:* Okay. Can you give us your parent's names and occupations?

*Lois Freeman:* Oh, yes. My mother was a teacher.

And Leah May Baker, Akers, my maiden name is Akers, and my dad was an accountant, CPA.

[3:15]

Robert Edgar Akers.

*Khadija Hassan:* Do you have any siblings?

*Lois Freeman:* Yes. Not living. I had one sister and three brothers, but I'm the only survivor. My last surviving sibling, my one brother and sister died in – let's see, nine years ago.

*Khadija Hassan:* What did they do for a living?

*Lois Freeman:* My sister started out teaching, she graduated from UT. But then she went to work at ___ _____, Kingsport, you know, the big Eastern corporation as an administrative assistant. I think she started out as secretary and then she was administrative assistant.

[4:10]

And my oldest brother was a – well, I guess, salesman primarily. He worked for _(Burris)_ _, adding machine company. And toward the end, when he retired, he was head of the national Tennessee office, he was manager of that office. My middle brother got – was disabled in high school. He played football and received an injury that paralyzed him on one side playing football.

And so he was living, you know, as disabled. He did get retrained into some of the Tennessee programs for the handicapped and did do some type of work. Minimum wage.

[5:02]

But for the most part he was living with my parents as a disabled person. My youngest brother went to college and he ended up working on the railroad as an engineer.

VIDEO CUT: 05:19:17

_(name of ) Railroad ran through my hometown, and he was engineer on the railroad.

Much to my mother and daddy's disappointment when he dropped out of college to do that. But he got married.

*Khadija Hassan:* What was it like growing up in Knoxville?

*Lois Freeman:* We moved to Irwin when I was about eight years old, and it was a great life. You know, as a small child, it's hard to really have that many – but I know that my dad was very well off then, but when we moved to Irwin, and he went to work for the railroad as an accountant, and of course, times were a little bit tougher during the Depression and there was five children, and so – but it was a great life.

[6:19]

Growing up in a big family and my mother and daddy were very caring parents.

*Khadija Hassan:* What kind of activities were you involved in as a kid?

*Lois Freeman:* Well, I was a bit of a tomboy, since I had three brothers. My sister was three years older, but my two younger brothers, I played a lot of ball with them. But I played tennis and in high school, I played basketball. Not too great, but they let me play occasionally.

[7:00]

And I was in the band; played the clarinet. And I still played in the band when I went to college.

*Khadija Hassan:* Can you share some of the memories from your childhood that influenced you later in life?

*Lois Freeman:* You mean personal event or what?

*Khadija Hassan:* Anything that you'd like to bring up.

*Lois Freeman:* Well, my mother and daddy and the type of individuals that they were, of course, rearing me and all, but their outlook on life and they always wanted us to achieve and do as well as you can under whatever circumstances. But I would say what I really give the most reward for my work is during the – my husband was an attorney, and was already involved in civil rights work when we married in the '50s and came to Memphis.

[8:07]

So he got me involved in things like that, and so I was very active in the Civil Rights Movement in the '60s, and as a matter of fact, we left our church and joined the Unitarian church because of their work, on behalf of the Civil Rights program. And then about ten of us organized what is now today the Unitarian Universal Fellowship in Memphis, because we thought that the church wasn't progressive enough.

And so through the church, we all were very much involved in Civil Rights movement during the '60s. And we had a wonderful mentor, a Dr. Peter Cooper. At the time I knew him, I would say he was about 80 years old and taught at LeMoyne-Owen College.

[9:00]

Had this big shock of white hair and had always taught at an African American college.

And he was just a wonderful influence on all of us and our Unitarian fellowship. And then when he had to retire, he left us and went to California, and it really, we, I think, really realized what an influence he had. Because he lived among the students over there, and helped pave the way for some of 'em.

He was not married, and he was a very big influence for me in the Civil Right days. Dr. Peter Cooper.

*Khadija Hassan:* How did you meet your husband?

[10:00]

*Lois Freeman:* Through my next door neighbor. He was going, I lived near university and I was going to night classes, my next door neighbor knew him, and she introduced me while he was in law school. And when he graduated, we married; he moved back to Memphis and then we married the next year.

VIDEO CUT: 10:27:21

*Khadija Hassan:* What church were you with before? Before you decided to move into a church that was focused on Civil Rights?

*Lois Freeman:* I'll tell you frankly why we changed churches. We didn't we had gone to some evening events at the Unitarian church, and were very influenced because even on Sunday sermons, they were topical.

[11:16]

But we were members, very good supporting members of Union Avenue Memphis, and I think my husband's exact words were, "We're gonna have to change churches." I know you'd been expressing some dissatisfaction and he went on to say, he said, Most of the time, it just seems while we're here, it's always they want money for something.

You know, and he says, it's more for material things to do with the church. And that was in the '60s and people were, you should be out doing Civil Rights and people thinking about – cause you know, Memphis was a very volatile place at that time.

[12:06]

Maxine Smith had it well organized, and she and my husband and Russell Sugarman, Maxine Smith, A.W. Willis, those were the three main persons in the African American community who were pushing the Civil Rights – and they got my husband involved along with Ann Rickey.

An older attorney at that time than my husband, but black female attorney that was very involved with him, and they got my husband involved in the Civil Rights movement and he, in turn, involved me.

It was just a time when it was important to take a stand. I remember when Martin Luther King was killed it wasn't safe to be out at night.

[13:03]

I worked – my office was downtown on Front Street, and they sent everybody home in the middle of the afternoon because – no one knew what was going to happen with all the marching going on and everything.

And that was a very sad time for Memphis. My husband was in the courthouse when they gave the – he was in court that day on something else, and he said when they came in to get the injunction to prevent his march, and that's how he got so involved. His being in court that day. But they tried to stop his march, but as you know, he continued.

It was a very sad and volatile, dangerous time in Memphis.

[14:04]

And I can remember I was more or less, except for just really close friends who probably did not totally agree with me, make a stand, but I was very unpopular at my office during that period. Because not many people were willing to make a stand.

I remember when the first African American young woman came to work. There were four of us sitting in the office and two were here and two like you all, and the coffeepot was right there, and so we all had a little agreement, they'd just nod when she come in, but would just tolerate her.

I'm not being noble or anything, but to me, she was a brave young woman to be willing to buck all that and to come in there, so I went to lunch with her her first day.

[15:00]

And she was Helen Whalen, you've heard the name Whalen here in Memphis, haven't you? Her son is a very famous orchestra player now, saxophonist, and her husband was very much involved, Kenneth, and she integrated the postal service.

VIDEO CUT: 15:22:20

She came from Washington for that sole purpose, which was pretty – I thought courageous but very tough thing to do. And there were a lot of people, like two close friends of mine, who didn't want to do anything, but they said they were glad that somebody was doing it, but they – you know, they didn't want to take a position.

But you know, you can win people over if just one of you takes a position.

[16:00]

I remember then about three or four months later, we had an African American male to come into the office and gradually then it worked. But it was really hard for those people who broke the – who did the first integrating of the federal government.
I guess I hadn't made clear, but the regional offices of the federal government, this was a Tennessee Regional office, our home office was in Atlanta, but each state office, you know, had, and we were the central office in the state of Tennessee.

And so it was pretty courageous and a big thing for her to come to integrate that office.

[17:00]

*Khadija Hassan:* Can we go back a little bit? Can you tell us about what elementary school you went to? Your school life during your childhood?

*Lois Freeman:* That's something I shouldn't cover – there were no African American families in my hometown to my knowledge until I was much older, till maybe I left and come back; or I was in high school. But there was only African American family that lived in Irvin while I was growing up.

And to this day, there's – I imagine there's a handful in Irvin. It's a small town in Northeast Tennessee. It's just about 18 miles from the North Carolina line. And if you go to Johnson City and Kingsport, it's northeast of them and it's about four or five thousand population.

[18:09]

Pardon me. And there were no African American families except for that one family, and I thought that was pretty courageous when

they broke in to that– but I grew up in an almost totally white community.

And when I went to college the first two years – and then of course, when I went to UT, but back then they were beginning to integrate then at UT. But when I went to work for the federal government, they were just beginning to integrate the offices.

I remember just one or two people that at that time that had begun to integrate. Then there was more of a major one, but I was working at the postal service in the regional office when Helen came down and all.

[19:10]

But I remember we had one African American who ran the mail room at TVA, and that was in the early days. That was before – that was the late '40s. So he was really an early one. And he was college educated, and he and I used to have lot of chats, and I always thought he was another staunch courageous person to come into that atmosphere.
But it was a little bit better atmosphere than it was a lot of places. It was the legal office, and we had attorneys who came from all over the United States, and so they were a little bit more liberal minded. We had attorneys from up around New England and out of Washington.

[20:04]

So it was a little bit more open atmosphere there than it was in the other offices of TVA or any government office at that time.

VIDEO CUT: 20:15:19

*Khadija Hassan:* What college did you attend?

*Lois Freeman:* I started out at Tennessee Wesleyan College, that was Methodist, 'cause I got a scholarship. And then, after I – I guess I went there for a year and a half, and then I went to work for TVA 'cause my brother got hurt playing football and had financial problems, so I did start going to night school. So I started at UT and so the whole time I was in Knoxville, I went to UT. And then when I came to Memphis, as long as they had some offices downtown there where I worked, I continued going to UT and then I finished at University of Memphis and did my work, most of it, at Memphis State then.

[21:12]

*Khadija Hassan:* Was there any racial tension on campus?

*Lois Freeman:* Since I was off campus, you know, you don't, and I was trying to think about my classes. I guess integration had begun to take hold then, and I don't remember too much seeing any of that, you know. Segregation or people being racist.

*Khadija Hassan:* Which church did you belong to when you were growing up?

*Lois Freeman:* Methodist. My grandfather was a Methodist minister.

[22:02]

And when I married, as I said, my husband and I were were both reared in the Methodist church. But then we joined the Unitarian church.

*Khadija Hassan:* Can you explain what a Unitarian church is?

*Lois Freeman:* Well, they have a Christian belief, but you can be either secular – they believe in a supreme being, but it's not necessarily the same Christian belief that – higher power, I think is the word. And so to me, there is a God. In my religion, but it's a little more secular than your fundamentalist churches.

And I've been contented in Unitarian churches. I belong, as I said, because of their attitude, the church here in Memphis during the '60s, because they didn't – I think our minister, oh he was a brilliant man.

[23:15]

He said he believed in integration, but – he always had all these conditions, and they didn't go out of their way to try to integrate the church. So that's when we left the Unitarian church and formed the Unitarian fellowship in 1964.

And it still exists today. They used to meet over at Prescott Baptist Church, but now they meet – what is that – I forget the place now. But after they didn't have a Sunday school and everything – I still, I say I'm part fellowship and part Neshoba.

[24:05]

When they built the new Unitarian church, was established in oh, I imagine about 40 years ago, I joined it, so I kind of, up until recently, I've been both Unitarian fellowship and Neshoba, but now I'm a full fledged member at Neshoba, which is very open church.

They're a little more conservative at Down on the River, and they weren't as assertive and as aggressive as we thought they should be during the Civil Rights days.

And that's really one of their main goals in their code, in their creed, that you know, the rights of man and we just felt that like that wasn't being fulfilled.

[25:04]

But I think it's changed a great deal today. That was 40 years ago.

VIDEO CUT: 25:10:00

*Khadija Hassan:* Who were your role models growing up?

*Lois Freeman:* Well, of course, I thought my mother was a wonderful role model. Well, I guess Eleanor Roosevelt was a great role model. Then I guess when I got to working in the '50s, the women who were leading the whole women's movement, the women's leadership forum – and I've been very involved in forming equal employment opportunity, the federal women's program, and now, out of Washington, about ten years ago, we organized the women's leadership forum.

[26:04]

That was under Bill Clinton's administration. Through Hillary and Tipper Gore were very involved, and I was the one that organized the Memphis, the women's leadership forum.

So I'm still promoting women's rights.

*Eric Neimeyer:* So I understand that you were very involved with the voting rights act?

*Lois Freeman:* Yes.

*Eric Neimeyer:* Could you tell us about that experience and job?

*Lois Freeman:* Well, what it was, the Department of Justice attorneys, they were responsible for setting up the program. And they would determine, they would get reports, I'm sure, from people actively investigating in the communities and primarily in Mississippi and then the Justice Department would set up the programs, and they would be involved in each one.

[27:07]

And then the US Office of Personnel Management, my employer, then they'd delegate the responsibility to them for sending in people to work at the polls or to run and be a manager and run an office.

And in the beginning, I worked at the polls, and then I started, as I mentioned earlier, I opened the offices, and it was very dangerous. But the beginning they said, and they sent mostly males in those early days, but I know a couple of times, you had to be there in the wee hours of the morning.

And I remember one time when I went, I lived in Biloxi, Mississippi, but I had to go over to Alabama and I would have to leave about 4:30 or 5:00 in the morning, and it'd be after dark, and I'd come out of that office and they'd be totally lonely street, and that was the scariest assignment I ever had.

[28:18]

But for the most part, by the time I got into the program, the real dangers had begun to abate, but they said it was quite dangerous in the beginning.

They had cars that were attacked, and you all have seen all the things that happened to other Civil Rights, but by the time my program got well underway, it wasn't as dangerous, but I know that first year or so, my husband wasn't, as he found out about it, he wasn't too happy about me, in the wee hours of the morning, traveling the back roads of Alabama and Mississippi.

But it was a very enlightening experience.

[29:01]

And I think it was a very rewarding experience because we've had a lot of people who have never, ever had the right to vote for years

if it hadn't been for the voter rights programs. And the Justice Department did an excellent job of organizing it and monitoring it. 'cause you had an attorney that you could go to.

But I know one assignment I was on, I was totally by myself in that little place. And I didn't like getting there too early in the morning or having to leave at night, but – and I guess they'd kind of forgotten, or decided that all the dangers were passed, but you know, things are still happening today; you don't know if you're still gonna have somebody.

And I'll never forget one night as I came out and incidentally which made it worse, I was in the basement, and I came up out of the basement, and it wasn't one of those post offices where they kept open all night, and I came up out of that basement to get my car and I see two or three people hanging around across the street.

[30:19]

I was so glad to get in my car. But then I still had to go about 15 miles before I got to the main highway on a little narrow country road that was hemmed in by trees. That was one I was glad to get out of. That I didn't have to stay.

I had some very good experiences some places, but I know the first couple times I went, I heard 'em – one of the women in the post office told me that they'd been told they were not to speak to those Civil Rights workers.

[31:00]

But she came down and visited with me a couple times and told me what the attitude was. That we were not at all welcome by the local people, but after a couple years, they accepted it.

VIDEO CUT: 31:20:06

*Eric Neimeyer:* Did you say that you were based in Biloxi at that time?

*Lois Freeman:* One time when I went down I was based in Biloxi. To go over and work in a post office in Alabama, and that's the only time I ever went over to Alabama. But most of the time, I was around Indianola, Mississippi and Hernando and those places. And after about the first year, I lived in the same town, I had my motel room.

But we drove unmarked cars; we didn't drive government cars. Because the agents still considered that people were pretty upset about it.

[32:04]

I guess people are still upset today.

*Eric Neimeyer:* Are there any stories that you would like to share with us about your memories of the Civil Rights movement itself?

*Lois Freeman:* Well, I remember, let's see, there was a big march we had down on Main Street, even Mayor Lowe, after Martin Luther King, and Mayor Lowe was very adamant about that, so a lot of us participated in that march. And I just remember that there was some – oh, I know what, I think it was a very important thing:

The Women's Saturday Luncheon Group.

[33:00]

That was to integrate the restaurants in Memphis, and our luncheon group integrated many a restaurant in Memphis. It was Maxine Smith and Ann Willis and Ann Rickey and quite a female attorney and a lot of our church members. Women in the Unitarian church. I remember we were having our church meetings at King Cotton Hotel at that time, so we integrated the King Cotton Hotel Lunch Restaurant. But the Saturday Luncheon Group was a very effective women's group in trying the open up the restaurants in Memphis.

I remember the lunch counters, being at some of the – at that time, I remember one of our young college students at that time, she went and sat at one of the stools at the little drugstore with several of her college friends, trying to integrate the lunch counters and like that.

[34:15]

But it was a very effective program in integrating restaurants in Memphis. And the manager at the King Cotton Hotel said that he'd been wanting to do it, but that we made it easy for him through his management by us insisting on doing it.

But it was just a lot of high feeling on a part of people. They just didn't want to open up their restaurants, so it was an important thing.

*Eric Neimeyer:* You had said that Mayor Lowe was adamant about the march after King's death.

*Lois Freeman:* Yeah, he just wasn't a very- I wouldn't call him exactly a Civil Rights supporter.

[35:04]

And my husband and I, my husband had helped to get him elected, which he was very sorry for after that. Because he was anything but open minded. And the march was trying to kind of open up his eyes, open up the city itself.

*Eric Neimeyer:* Did you have any children?

*Lois Freeman:* I have one son.

*Eric Neimeyer:* And when was he born?

*Lois Freeman:* As a matter of fact, he was born here, I was seven months pregnant when we formed the fellowship, Unitarian fellowship. Left the Unitarian Church and formed the fellowship. And he is now living in Memphis and works in community service with the county government.

[36:09]

John; that's my only son. Only child. And we felt very fortunate to have him. We'd been married, I think 13 years when he came along.

And he is the only male to carry the name on. All the rest have six granddaughters and one grandson. My son is carrying on the family name.

VIDEO CUT: 36:29:20

*Eric Neimeyer:* So was he a young child during the Civil Rights movement?

*Lois Freeman:* Mm-hmm. I got pictures of him sitting by Dr. Cooper at the luncheon, he's sitting in Dr. Cooper's lap at the luncheon. We all ate lunch together after the services; we'd go somewhere for lunch.

[37:00]

We left the King Cotton, we met over at, as I said at Memphis State at Prescott, there was a little Methodist Community Center that we met at Sundays, but we'd all have lunch together afterwards and yes, John was integrated into it early. He was very involved from day one.

*Eric Neimeyer:* So I take it you didn't have to – you didn't' really shelter him from race relations. You brought him along with you –

*Lois Freeman:* Brought him along, 'cause I remember when he one summer – I guess it was the summer after he graduated, been in college one year and he had to go and do his – that's when they were having to do six weeks or three months of military service.

And somehow or other, he had gotten involved with that church out on Winchester.

[38:15]

And had quite a little discussion one night about it, and he used to say, he got up and came home because he said they were just – they were just very racist and said that they didn't see how his parents could permit him to be involved with African Americans.

Which wasn't too Christian. I think they've changed now, they're pretty well integrated now. But we didn't go, we didn't stay long. I mean, I went – I started going to church with him on Sunday to kind of monitor what – you know, what do you call it. I figured they brainwashed him; I didn't know what they were brainwashing him with.

[39:01]

Because he was very much involved for a couple years there. So, hard as it was, I started going to the services at that church to see what kind of- because you know, you shouldn't be taught racist attitudes in your church.

*Eric Neimeyer:* Of course.

*Lois Freeman:* Or shouldn't – you should be, maybe they didn't teach it, but it was more or less the practice.

*Eric Neimeyer:* What do you remember about Dr. King first coming to town? Do you remember the mood around that?

*Lois Freeman:* You know, I guess my strongest remembrance is the march and then when he was killed. Which was I remember all the, as I mentioned earlier, they just closed everything and up downtown and told everybody to go home, 'cause they thought – the mood was so volatile, and as I said, my husband had been in court that day and when they were trying to get the injunction against the march, and it was just a very dangerous time.

[40:22]

And that's my strongest remembrances of him. You just couldn't believe that it could possibly have happened.

It just didn't seem like anyone could really have that much hatred in them. But we still have it today, unfortunately.

*Eric Neimeyer:* So who or what encouraged you to get into the movement? You said your husband was a big influence?

*Lois Freeman:* My husband was a big influence because he had graduated from law school and he came back here and almost immediately got involved.

[41:10]

So when we married, he was very much involved. I was busy getting started and trying to get a new job and everything, but after a few years, I became involved with him. And that was when Maxine Smith and all of 'em were doing so much and beginning to have the – trying to get organization wise like the Women's Luncheon Group and all.

VIDEO CUT: 41:40:24

And I guess that was – those were the earliest of my memories of it. But I guess the strongest memory I would ever have about Dr. King was seeing him and hearing his mountaintop speech and then you know, they kept repeating and repeating it after he was assassinated, and kept showing him getting shot – the Lorraine Hotel where he was shot, and I guess those are my strongest memories of him.

[42:20]

*Eric Neimeyer:* You had said that you had a government position for a while dealing with enforcing handicapped laws?

*Lois Freeman:* Yes. Each major government agency had to hire a certain percentage of the handicapped, and I know that one of the biggest pushes we made was for the Internal Revenue Service center opened out there, and we tried to get computer operators and typists.

[43:04]

More computer operators. You know, hired, and also at the defense depo, because they hired a lot of clerical people. But that was the biggest place where we were able to get- in the maintenance programs and in the clerical typists and clerk positions.

*Eric Neimeyer:* And what years did you work that job?

*Lois Freeman:* That would have been, let's see, I'm trying to think. It would be early '70s was the Federal Women's Program. I think the handicapped, I used to be the coach when the handicapped laws – so it must have been in the '70s. Because I was made handicapped coordinator. I had to go across the state of Tennessee to be sure that – well, it was a twofold thing.

[44:05]

The equal employer opportunity thing, I kind of ended up with it and be sure that they had a strong handicap program in their – each agency, big major agency in the state of Tennessee, had to have an affirmative action plan. And equal employment opportunity plan. They were required in order to meet the goals of the federal government had set for hiring minorities.

As a handicap coordinator and an EEO coordinator, I had to visit the different agencies. And after I became the training consultant, I started doing workshops on both programs in the major agencies.

[45:00]

*Eric Neimeyer:* Kind of wrapping up to get a sense of everything, could you compare race relations in Memphis now versus when, before the Civil Rights Movement, for instance?

*Lois Freeman:* You know, I'm not in the work environment and all, but I'm involved in a lot of organizations, and they're pretty well integrated. I know we have what we call the public issues forum, and we've had presidents, African American and white.

But I was trying to think of something a little more representative, maybe it would be the Women's Political Cause.

[46:04]

And it's been very difficult for us to really integrate it because African American women, we really actively recruit 'em, but they have a lot of strong organizations, don't you think through their churches, and we never really were successful.

We had about half a dozen that we got, but we were always – it was always still a minority in the organization. And the same thing in our women's leadership forum and – but now, I'll tell you where we really are well integrated at, cooperatively and work very well together is at the Democratic Women's Organization. Shelby County Democratic Women.

As a matter of fact, that membership is probably larger African American.

[47:01]

But we have a big organization and a very active one that works well together. And we also had, a few years ago, they had this – what they called it– I don't know, just trying to get a new type of organization going here, and we were pretty well integrating it.

VIDEO CUT: 47:32:11

And now I think it's just kind of died out to a few people and we're all back in our regular organizations like the Democratic Women and the political caucus and Women's Foundation, Women of Achievement.

Now, that's another organization that's very well integrated; Women of Achievement Organization.

[48:04]

You know, they give awards in several categories every year, and the Women's Foundation, we do grants. We pick about six

organizations here in the city, like all your different charities and things that I didn't realize there was so many in Memphis, and every year, they do the – unless they've quit doing it this year, they set up programs and about six of these foundations and help 'em to get money to get – to become a more thriving organization, particularly to women who are working and trying to rear their families and need some assistance.

[49:02]

And I think there's about six or seven of those that are active now. But I haven't been as involved in that for about three years.

*Eric Neimeyer:* It sounds like you really haven't let your retirement slow you down in terms of women's rights and-

*Lois Freeman:* No, I had pnemonia about two years ago, and I was making the remark that I didn't have much energy and my son said, Well, I might have if I was moderating my outside activities to how I felt. It's kind of hard to slow down. And you don't stay involved, then you – it keeps you young.

It keeps you active, I should say.

*Eric Neimeyer:* Well, is there anything else that you'd like to add? Any other memories?

*Lois Freeman:* No, but I think it's been a wonderful experience for me to meet all three of you, and I want to be sure you write your names for me, all three, and let me know how your program – what are you trying to accomplish through your program?

[50:06]

*Eric Neimeyer:* Well, we're making a digital archive that –

*Lois Freeman:* I read the paragraph of archival –

*Eric Neimeyer:* And we're hoping for, I think middle school teachers is who we're really aiming at, primarily, but really, just any way for teachers to look at our website and then integrate it into their classroom to help their students get a more full and rich understanding of the Civil Rights movement.

Because we – all of our experiences with learning about American history, we feel like the Civil Rights movement doesn't get enough attention and –

*Lois Freeman:* Now, I'll tell you, you know, they had a multi cultural diversity program through the YWCA going several years ago for awhile, and I was active in it, and we got a good foothold in maybe about four or five high schools, but I don't think it's survived.

[51:15]

*Eric Neimeyer:* Yeah. It is hard to do with standardized tests and everything, teachers feel kind of trapped –

*Lois Freeman:* So you're all working in the kind of work.

*Eric Neimeyer:* Yeah, but our hope is that we can get these interviews online and we have a lot of documents that we've put online – we got a ton of documents from Russell Sugarman. He gave us a big box of –

*Lois Freeman:* Oh, Russell. I saw his picture in the paper yesterday or the day before – he and my husband were so close, and I used to run into him occasionally, and I forget that Russell is just about the only survivor of that group of people, and I was trying to remember what this article was – oh, he's still a commissioner or something in the government.

[52:06]

Steve Korn's mailer for his campaign has Russell Sugarman's picture on it.

VIDEO CUT: 52:14:21

*Eric Neimeyer:* Hmm. He's still a judge; still on the bench.

*Lois Freeman:* He's still.

*Khadija Hassan:* Yeah, he's a judicial commissioner.

*Eric Neimeyer:* He's really cool.

*Lois Freeman:* What is he involved with you all in?

*Eric Neimeyer:* He was more involved last year than this year.

*Khadija Hassan:* Yeah, he was really involved last year and he gave us a lot of documents to scan and put up on the website.

*Lois Freeman:* Yeah, I'm gonna see, a lot of my things, I had an attic fire in my house just before I moved, and it got some of my records, but I'm gonna see if I can find some other things to give you all.

*Eric Neimeyer:* Oh, if you could that would be amazing.

*Lois Freeman:* And I thought maybe – I meant to, but I'll send you a copy of the voting rights thing.

[53:03]

*Khadija Hassan:* Okay.

*Lois Freeman:* And then I think I have, I'll see what I can find for your - because I think it's wonderful that you all are doing this. Rhodes just has so many great things; they seem to come different and creative and – but is it gonna permanent in the library here?

*Khadija Hassan:* Yeah, it's gonna be part of the archive here, too.

*Lois Freeman:* That's what I understood from the article. What you had in that mailout to me. Well, I think this has been a wonderful experience for me.

*Eric Neimeyer:* Oh, it's been great for us too.

*Khadija Hassan:* Yeah, thank you for letting us interview you.

*Eric Neimeyer:* Yeah, thanks a lot.

*Lois Freeman:* Well, I have really enjoyed coming and it just is great to know that people are interested because like you said, you're afraid people are going to forget that we still have a lot of work to be done.

[54:00]

And I know my son, while he's not an active participant as a program person, he's always worked in an area – he was administrative assistant for both Congressman Ford Sr. and Congressman Ford Jr. And now he's been in community service work with Mayor Horton and so he in his way– you know, he's still involved.

And I just think it is something we should be bringing all of the generations along, and I'm glad you all are doing something like this.

What kind of response do you think you're making here at the college?

*Eric Neimeyer:* Here at the college we have a couple professors who are really onboard with the project and they're helping us in big ways. I think that we want to get we want to get more of it together and online before we start soliciting to teachers and administrators too much, because you know, they're gonna say well, what do you have, and we don't want to say, well, this is what we have so far, we want to say, we have all of this and impress them that way.

[55:20]

*Lois Freeman:* But I think it's a wonderful thing and wonderful work you're doing and hopefully it will reach a lot more people. But I do want you to be sure you do put your names on here.

*Khadija Hassan:* Thank you.

*Eric Neimeyer:* Thank you so much. I mean, I haven't had an interview that, I think, was with someone as involved as you were.

*Lois Freeman:* Well, you know, just seemed to kind of happen. But I really feel like that my husband, in the beginning was a strong influence.

[56:04]

But then the work environment, you know, as things developed and of course, you know, federal government was really the one who had to do the integrating. And personnel management or human resources is where it started. And the Justice Department, so I did get an opportunity that a lot of people don't get. Through my husband and through the –

*[Abrupt End of Audio]*