Eyewitnesses:
Violence, Discrimination, Death Alley

Carrie Skipwith Mayfield
Lonnie Belle Hodges
Kneeland Hilburn Clemons
Fannie Belle Watson
Edythe B. Heslip and Marjorie Pryor
Vivienne Malone-Mayes

CARRIE SKIPWITH MAYFIELD

Excerpts from *Oral Memoirs of Carrie Skipwith Mayfield*, an oral history interview conducted by Vivienne Malone-Mayes on December 22, 1989, in Waco, Texas.

Malone-Mayes: Let's go back to—do you remember any of the other episodes we heard about Bridge Street? Were you down there when they lynched that man? Did you hear about that? How they lynched this black man, tarred and feathered him and drug him through the streets? And I heard they drug him down Bridge Street.

Mayfield: [Editor's note: Mayfield was born in 1903. We believe that she is referring to the Jesse Washington lynching in 1916, as she would have been nineteen years old and out of school at the time of the Jesse Thomas lynching in 1922.] Now, that—I don't know whether we are talking about the right—right man, but there was a colored man that they did lynch and dragged his body up Sixth Street, up so far. They hanged him on the courthouse lawn. We were coming from school. We got along there that morning, I know my father said to me, "Don't go down Sixth Street. Fifth Street's better." Sixth Street wasn't—he told me—he said, "Don't go that way today. Go another way."

Malone-Mayes: Were you going to high school? What school were you going to?

Mayfield: I was going to high school at that time. [Editor's note: Moore High School included grades seven through eleven at this period.]

Malone-Mayes: You were going to high school.

Mayfield: I was always—if you tell me not to do anything, I'm going to do it to see why I couldn't have but I did. So I went bustling down Sixth Street that morning, and when I got to the courthouse, that lawn was just full of white men all over, just covered. And we were just wiggling in and out, trying to get to—going across to the other side, trying to get on the street right for me to go to school. And they didn't bother us. They didn't say anything to us, didn't bother us or anything. We didn't say anything to them, just kept going. So I said, "Wonder what all those people are doing down there." I didn't know until I came home that

evening that they had lynched a man. That was why, but my father didn't want to tell me what was going to happen, and he didn't want me to see it. And he said, "Don't go that way home. Go another way."
But it happened, and when we came out of school, in the showplace's window, different showcases downtown, had parts of his body—burned body in the showcase window where you could see. We passed by and looked at it like—we didn't know what it was. And after I got home and I got to talking to Papa, and Papa was talking to different people, and they said they had burned this man, and different people got parts of his body as souvenirs. I said, "Lord have mercy, that's why Papa didn't want me to go that way because he knew what was happening, but he did not want me to know." That was the most—ooh. And I don't know what to say—I've never—the tree where they hanged his body—the tree was still standing there with its burned leaves, but the rope was gone. And they said they took his body and brought it up Sixth Street. Brought it right up, dragging it behind a car, right on up Sixth Street. But we got home before all that happened. We didn't get to see any of that. We just heard of it after it happened. I don't know what I would have done if I had have seen it. You know, just to see the actual thing. But it happened. It absolutely happened. It happened in my day. We were going to high school. And I know that Papa carefully said, "Don't go down Sixth Street today. Go another street." He told me how to go or something. I wondered why he wanted me to do that. He hadn't been telling me that. Because we go straight down Sixth Street to Washington, go across Washington, come to Austin, come on down to the right street to go down to the school.

Malone-Mayes: Were you going to Moore High School? . . . The old Moore High School, First and Clay.

Mayfield: Yeah, um-hm. . . .

Malone-Mayes: Where did you live? Did you live—were you with your family on North Eighth Street or Sixth Street or what?

Mayfield: No, we were on Seventh Street. Dr. [George S.] Conner lived on Sixth and Kentucky, right on the corner. We lived right across from Dr. Conner on Seventh Street. It wasn't a street that it run into, but it was a little alley, a little bitty, narrow alley that run from Fifth—from Sixth to Seventh. And we would all—whoever was going somewhere on Sixth or going on Fifth—going on Sixth or Seventh, go through the alley, any time of day or night, you weren't afraid. Nobody bothered you. . . .

But that Sixth Street was known—I don't know if the people up there now know anything about it, but for years it was terrible (noise in background) what people thought about it. To drag a man, put the rope around his neck and they done burned him. Burned his body to charcoal and those men downtown got part of it. We came home and we looked in the windows—and come along and looked in the window: "What is this?" And some of them says, "That looks like such-and-such, say, part of a person." Went up there—go on up to another store and something—and see something else. Put two and two together and finally find out that it was a person. Got home, everybody was just up in the air talking about it. . . .

Malone-Mayes: Did they ever discover or find out—did you all know the man? Did your family know him? I mean did people know him?

Mayfield: I don't think it was just one person. I think it was a bunch of them. And they say they went to different stores. Now, I don't know where they got that. They said they went to the different stores that were responsible for it, and they got this asbestos stuff to burn him with.

Malone-Mayes: No, I meant, did you all know the black man that they lynched?

Mayfield: Oh, yeah.

Malone-Mayes: Did you all know him. Know his name and everything?

Mayfield: Yeah, uh-huh.

Malone-Mayes: What was his name? Do you remember?

Mayfield: That's been so long ago, and when you want to think of a thing, you can't. But we knew him. He was a person that—I mean he wasn't just well known, but then when you hear his name, we knew he was that person.

Malone-Mayes: Do you think he was guilty? What did they accuse him of? Raping a white woman, I'm sure. Were they doing this because he was supposed to have raped a white woman?

Mayfield: Yeah.

Malone-Mayes: Do you think he was guilty? Or did they ever find out whether or not he was guilty or what?

Mayfield: I don't know whether they ever found out. That was the last time I heard—the last time I heard of it, they still—they know who did it. They know who did the burning. They know that. But I don't know whether we, as a race, know who it was, really. But a lot of people said they knew him. I think they said he lived in East Waco.

LONNIE BELLE HODGES

Excerpts from *Oral Memoirs of Lonnie Belle Hodges*, an oral history interview conducted by Vivienne Malone-Mays on August 30, 1990, in Waco, Texas

Malone-Mayes: . . . What was the relationship between whites and blacks? Well, and Negroes on Bridge Street, or even the Square during the twenties?

Hodges: Well, as far as I remember, the relationship was good. They all ran some kind of business.

Malone-Mayes: I know maybe you didn't pay it much attention.

Hodges: Well, those that had businesses there, it was all right. But now these other people that drifted in did lots of horrible things on Bridge Street that I hate to mention. Especially in front of the city hall. Now, the city hall was in the middle of the Square. It connected Second Street, Third Street, and Bridge Street.

Malone-Mayes: Right.

Hodges: At one time, you know, they burned a boy at the stake there, a Negro boy, an innocent boy.

Malone-Mayes: Right at the city hall.

Hodges: Right at the city hall.

Malone-Mayes: But you could see it from Bridge Street?

Hodges: Yes, yes, you could see it from Bridge Street. Bridge Street ran right into the—to the city hall.

Malone-Mayes: I know. I know. I just wanted to make it clear to those who are listening that you could just walk outside of your building—

Hodges: And just look right in city hall.

Malone-Mayes: —and see them do this. Who did it? A mob or the Klan?

Hodges: I think some white people.

Malone-Mayes: Was it the Ku Klux Klan or an organized group?

Hodges: No, it wasn't the Ku Klux Klan. It was just the white people that had animosity in them for Negroes. Now, the boy that they burned, they drug him down Third Street first on the back of the car. He was a yard boy for a family. Had been a yard boy for several years. And this girl, they had a daughter there. And the daughter was going with a white boy across the street. And she was also going with a married man, white man. And this married man told her to stop going with this boy. But she didn't do it. So she and this boy were out riding in Cameron Park one night, and this married man killed this boy. And he had her to say that this Negro boy raped her and shot this boy, but it wasn't true, so I heard. And they carried people up there to, for her to, Negro boys, for her to identify. But when they came to this boy, "Yes, that's him, that's him." And she almost fainted when she said that's him. Well, they didn't ask any words. They just grabbed him up and carried him on to the city hall, first thing they did. I don't know what all they did to him there. But you could hear the bells ringing and the people shouting as they carried this boy down Third and Jones, carried him straight down Third Street. You didn't know what was going on, until somebody told you what it was. Then they brought him back to the city hall. And they had some wood there and they made a bonfire and burned him right there at the city hall.

Malone-Mayes: Was he—he wasn't the only case, was he?

Hodges: No, that wasn't the only case. But he was the only one that was burned there. Waco regretted it afterwards, what had been done, because that was an innocent boy.

Malone-Mayes: How did they find out he was innocent? They finally discovered about the man?

Hodges: This man, yes. That's the thing. They said he'd lost his mind. The next year died; they found out about it. But they couldn't do anything about that then.

Malone-Mayes: What about the man that they drug through the streets? I know my father has told me the story, that his bones scraped his wagon wheel when he passed by.

Hodges: Yes, that's what I'm talking about it. That's the only one they drug through the street.

Malone-Mayes: Well, this one they drug all the way up to North Waco, too.

Hodges: Did they carry him to North Waco?

Malone-Mayes: Yes.

Hodges: I didn't know about that, but I knew that they carried him down South Third Street.

Malone-Mayes: Um-hm.

Hodges: Because everybody was running out to the gates. Everybody had fences around their home then. You didn't have just a blank walk out in the street. Then they'd go to the

fence and look and see what was the matter. They saw the boy. But they didn't know what it was until somebody came along and told them what happened.

Malone-Mayes: Yes. But he seemed to be the most memorable case in Waco.

Hodges: Then they had one, Roy Mitchell. They claimed he raped fourteen or fifteen white women. And they put him in jail. He stayed in jail for quite a while. And at least he was supposed to have been hung there at the city jail. But nobody saw it. And they believe that they slipped him out at night and carried him off somewhere else to keep from hanging him. Because everybody knew, at least they thought, that it was impossible for him to do that in two nights time. . .

The relationship between white people and Negro people were very bad. They just hadn't gotten that slavery idea out of them. . . . You couldn't ride the front of the streetcar. They had two short seats in the back and one long seat. And a sign up there Negroes, Whites. And if there were five vacant seats in the white section and three or four people standing up in the Negro section, you could not go up there and sit down. You just had to stand up wherever you were going. And you paid your nickel fare, just like they did. You couldn't drink water in places. You couldn't go to the bathroom in any of those places. It was just terrible.

Now, the Ku Klux Klan had a silent parade here one time. But they didn't parade anymore. I forget this sheriff's name; he was a very fine person. They decided to carry it to Lorena. And he went out there to stop them, and they shot this policeman in the stomach. Well, the Ku Klux Klan is still here. But they are silently working.

Malone-Mayes: Yes. We know that.

Hodges: But that parade went over. We went to see the parade because we wanted to see what was going on. It was just so silent it seemed like death, you know, or something like that. I don't know how you'd feel. You couldn't hear a sound. Not a sound of anything.

Malone-Mayes: You mean you went to see a Ku Klux Klan—

Hodges: A Ku Klan's parade down Franklin Street, yes.

Malone-Mayes: —parade down Franklin Street?

Hodges: Down Franklin Street, here in Waco. Oh, I guess, it seemed Mack and I had been married about two or three years, I guess at that time. We were married in 1914. This was about '15 or '16.

Malone-Mayes: So this is about '15 or '16 when they had this parade.

Hodges: Parade down Franklin Street.

Malone-Mayes: Did they ever burn any crosses in anyone's yard?

Hodges: I don't remember whether they burned any crosses in anyone's yard here, but they burned some crosses out of the city. But I don't know. I know one time people were afraid to go out at night for fear they'd get hurt or something, because you didn't have to be doing anything if you were a Negro. Now, I know the time that Negroes couldn't walk across Baylor campus unless they were working there. They had what they called student doctors. And those student doctors would beat you up. And Negroes lived all on the side of Baylor campus.

KNEELAND HILBURN CLEMONS

Excerpts from *Oral Memoirs of Kneeland Hilburn Clemons*, an oral history interview conducted by Vivienne Malone-Mayes on October 21, 1988, in Waco, Texas.

Clemons: . . . And, now, that was right on the corner, as we called it, Death Alley. (laughs) And the east side of the square, which was South Second Street, right on the corner. This is Death Alley.

Malone-Mayes: Now, is this Death Alley going down here?

Clemons: Yeah, this is Death Alley right here.

Malone-Mayes: Okay, let me write that on here. Death Alley. Now, why was it called Death Alley?

Clemons: Because so many people got killed in that alley. (both laugh) And they would—you know, they would find them there, and they didn't know who murdered them or anything. You know, it was big time. Waco was on big time. They murdered people and they found them in the alley, you know.

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Malone-Mayes: Now, Carolyn Fadal told me that in her father's drugstore, which was next to Harry Daum, way over here, that her uncle—her father and her uncle ran that drugstore, and that they got exceedingly mad with her one day for giving a black man water out of a glass.

Clemons: Oh, yes, this is true.

Malone-Mayes: So my point is, these white business—how much interaction was there between blacks—did black people more or less patronize the black businesses, and were they welcome in the white businesses?

Clemons: No, no. The blacks on the square would not patronize the white-owned businesses because of that reason. They always had a rear entrance for blacks, and blacks did not like that. And they would not patronize them. And, also, there wasn't a back entrance, it was always an alley entrance. You could not go in the front door. If you went in the front door, you had to stop there at the cash register and buy what you wanted, say, if it was a place selling cigarettes, and you could not go any further. And that was the set-up of minorities going into the white-owned businesses down there. But, now, Pete's Hamburger Stand—he had a restaurant in the back, but up front right next to the sidewalk he fried all of his hamburger patties up there and put them in the window. And all the dust and the flies and

everything else got on the hamburgers, and everybody said that's what made them so good, you know. So you could go to the windows there on the sidewalk and buy your hamburger. They would sell it to you right out of the window, but you could not go inside—he had a beer saloon and a restaurant, you know—and sit down and drink a bottle of beer with your hamburger. And of course, at that time, I wouldn't have been able to buy a bottle of beer, anyhow, because I was a kid, you know. But those who did want the beer—and right behind Pipkin's Drug Store and close to the Fadal Drug Store over here was the Fox Theatre.

Malone-Mayes: I remember seeing movies here at the Fox.

Clemons: Yeah, right. And it was a nickel to get in the theatre, and you could buy a very large bottle of pop—larger than you could drink—for a nickel. So it was fifteen cents to go to the movie and have a bag of popcorn and a bottle of pop with it, you see. But they had a side entrance at the front, which was upstairs, for all the black people to go. You had to sit upstairs, you see. It was the same thing at the Rex Theatre, which was in the 400 block of Austin Avenue, to go there. You could buy your ticket there at the ticket room at the front. But you had to go to the side door, go upstairs and sit in the balcony. This is the only place where black people could sit, you understand. And the same thing at the Rex as it was at the Fox. It was fifteen—a nickel to get in, for kids, you know.

Malone-Mayes: But not at the Gem Theatre.

Clemons: Not at the Gem Theatre, no. It was strictly an all-black theatre, yeah.

Malone-Mayes: And over here, Harry Daum was over on this side, and so blacks wouldn't patronize the clothing stores. Like I know they patronized—(both talk at once)

Clemons: Oh, yeah, yeah. Surely, surely, surely, yeah.

Malone-Mayes: —and the hardware stores, furniture stores.

Clemons: Right. In fact, the furniture that I have in my living room right there, now, the green chair and the green divan, my mother and my dad gave us that for our wedding present when we moved to this house here. And they got it from Clifton-Simpson. They said, Go down and pick up whatever you want, and we picked out the two pieces. And so that's still right here, now, that was bought at Clifton-Simpson. . . .

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Clemons: . . . The relationship, say, between white and black business people there on the square was to this extent: If you needed something, a favor for your business, you know, you were out of something, like that, or if another business could help you, they would let you have it until you could add it from the home shelves. So, for instance, if it happened on a Saturday night or Sunday when all the wholesale houses were closed—and this was with the other businesses. But, of course, with my dad, there was no way for him to borrow anything from anybody because the Palace Drug Store was just—it a longtime ago was a drugstore,

but it later turned into nothing but a beer saloon. They didn't have a soda fountain in there, you see. And they sold patent medicines. They didn't do any prescription work or anything like that, you see. And they were looking after each other so far as favors were concerned. If you needed something to tide you over until, say, Monday or something like this until where you could buy it in the wholesale house. But other than the relationship didn't go any further than this, you see.

Malone-Mayes: Well, this is what I felt, the reason I felt that it was actually two worlds . . . because when I met Nick Klaras, he had no idea of the Conner building, the Mecca Drug Store, and, yet, he told me he worked in his father's restaurant down there on the square. That's where his father worked at that time. . . .

Clemons: Pete's Hamburger Stand was Nick Klaras's daddy. . . .

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Clemons: . . . We couldn't walk up with Austin Avenue, you know. . . . And we had a certain route that we had to walk home by, North Waco kids. And the South Waco kids—I don't think they had a route because, you know, Second Street and Third and all, they were mostly black, anyway—black, anyhow.

Malone-Mayes: I just wondered if you could go by the Mecca?

Clemons: Oh, yeah, we could go by the Mecca. So, we could come right on up First Street to Bridge Street, come up Bridge to the Mecca. And then when we'd go home, we wouldn't go up Austin Avenue. We'd go on up Washington or maybe right on up Second Street to Jefferson Avenue, and up Jefferson to Sixth, and then home, you see. We never would go downtown.

Malone-Mayes: Um-hm. Well, that's what I was wondering.

Clemons: Because race relations were so bad.

Malone-Mayes: I know.

Clemons: They were so bad during that time.

Malone-Mayes: I remember. Because I remember Montgomery Ward being on Fourth, just south of Sanger-Harris, of course, and how they had water fountains for colored and white. And I'm sure that it was every place, all over town.

Clemons: Right. It was the same all over town. If you didn't go in the back door or the alley door, you couldn't eat in a white restaurant. . . .

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Clemons: . . . Now, the relationship between the white businessmen and the black businessmen was a beautiful relationship. One looked after the other, and they just got along like brothers the whole time they were there. If one could do another one a favor, they would do it. So the race relations were extremely well during that time, even though they weren't that well out in the city, you see. Because, as you know, it's a shame—history will tell you that a black man was lynched.

Malone-Mayes: My daddy told me about one that was lynched. They tarred—lynched and tarred him.

Clemons: They lynched him.

Malone-Mayes: Feathered him. And my daddy said—

Clemons: On the east side of the city hall. Right across from the square there, from the drugstore, from my dad's drugstore [Mecca Drug Store].

Malone-Mayes: And they drug him, didn't they?

Clemons: They drug him up Sixth Street, and my mother was carrying me at the time. My mother and daddy had married, and she was carrying me. Her mother lived at 612 North Sixth Street. So my grandmother called my mother at 1107 North Sixth Street, and told her, said, "Nixie, be sure and get in the house because they are dragging that man's body up Sixth Street." After they had just lynched him and tarred and feathered him.

Malone-Mayes: Well, my daddy said his bones scraped. He must have been drug behind a wagon or something, scraped his wheels when they passed by. So they must have carried him around the square first a little bit.

Clemons: If this is history—but this is a part of history that we don't even like to think about now talk about, but it's still history, yes.

Malone-Mayes: Do you remember the story behind him, tarring, lynching—tarring and feathering? I imagine it was over some white woman.

Clemons: Yes. As my parents told me about it, it was reported that he had raped a white woman. That after they tarred and feathered him, and drug him all up Sixth Street, and all over Waco, wherever they wanted to drag him. It came out, after the man was dead, that he was not the one that raped the woman. The woman, under questioning and pressure, told the truth, that she was trying to protect a man, which was a white man that had raped her, and she laid it on a Negro.

Malone-Mayes: Well, I had heard that story, too, from my father, and know about it.

FANNIE BELLE WATSON

Excerpts from *Oral Memoirs of Fannie Belle Watson*, an oral history interview conducted by Vivienne Malone-Mayes on July 31, 1990, in Waco, Texas

Malone-Mayes: Well, how would you describe the relationship between the whites and blacks on the Square in general?

Watson: I think they had a good relationship. As far as I know, they had a good relationship on that Square.

Malone-Mayes: Yet, the businesses were segregated.

Watson: Yeah.

Malone-Mayes:: Except, say, like the—I remember the little fish market on Second Street near the alley. I know no one was served there, except you went up—everybody stood, you know, to go get their fish. Standing places like grocery stores, things like that, all of the customers were treated alike.

Watson: Yeah.

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Watson: . . . But the children used to go around Third Street all around, I don't know. Come to North Waco. All those kids that lived back over in this way, and kids that lived between Third and Second went Second Street. And Cleo and all that bunch came on around the south side of the Square. I mean Franklin Street, not the south side of the Square, it went around Franklin Street on around Third Street and on up Austin Street. That's the way they went. They didn't—

Malone-Mayes: Go through the Square?

Watson: No indeed. Nobody went through the Square. We had to go through the Square, but you didn't stop. (laughs)

Malone-Mayes: I know.

Watson: You just went on up there. Why do you think we'd have stopped? What was you going to stop for? See, kids used to take their lunch to school back then. And then the parents would give them money, you know. They'd have money to spend in the cafeteria and like that.

EDYTHE B. HESLIP & MARJORIE PRYOR

Excerpts from *Oral Memoirs of Edythe B. Heslip and Marjorie Pryor*, an oral history interview conducted by Vivienne Malone-Mayes on August 4, 1990, in Waco, Texas.

Heslip: That's where the establishment [Dennis & Boykins] was then, on Bridge Street, across from the Mecca Drug Store. And later it was renovated and enlarged and was moved across the street where there was a more suitable location for a funeral home.

Malone-Mayes: And what were the reasons why they wanted to move across the street?

Heslip: I think the traffic on that side of the street was a little too busy for the serenity they needed for a funeral home. At that time, there was a street—an alley behind the establishment which was called Death Alley, and that certainly was not in a desirable location because there were so many confrontations going on that the people who would be coming for a wake or to visit or to view their loved one's remains, you know, didn't find it safe. So I think they were very happy to move across the street. They were still on the same street, but it was certainly a more suitable location.

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Pryor: Did you tell her about your experience at Goldstein's?

Heslip: I had been to Goldstein's shopping. After I finished shopping, I entered the waiting room there at Goldstein's, but blacks weren't supposed to sit there. As I sat down to wait for the car, a white lady ran out and hollered, "Nigger's out here! Nigger's out here!" A clerk came and told me I was supposed to get up, and I told him, "You get the manager." When the manager came and told me I was supposed to get up, I told him that there wasn't black or white on those dollars I had spent and I wasn't getting up. I was waiting to be picked up just like everybody else. During the argument, this nine-passenger Packard came up, and I walked out and got in it, and all of the eyes looked so funny because it was the funeral coach. (all laugh)

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Pryor: . . . I think they had a good relationship with different businesses there until night would fall on the weekends. And of course, as my sister said, the soldiers would come to town and it was best just to leave it to them because they would frequent the—at that time they could buy—I think they could buy liquor, couldn't they? . . .

Heslip: . . . That was back in the early forties. I'm almost sure they could because there'd have to be some reason for the people to get so spirited and to have the conflicts and confrontations they did. . . .

Pryor: And we [the funeral home] could look forward to getting some remains every Saturday night.

Heslip: Almost. That's true because there was going to be a shooting or a fight.

Pryor They did more stabbing then. It was rare to find people shooting each other. I guess they just didn't have guns, but such things as stabbing and—

Heslip: Choking until their tongues fell out. . . . On Saturday nights maybe he [Boykins, the funeral home director] would have two or three.

VIVIENNE MALONE-MAYES

Excerpts from *Oral Memoirs of Vivienne Lucille Malone-Mayes*, a series of oral history interviews conducted by Rebecca Sharpless, July 29, 1987, to August 5, 1987, in Waco, Texas.

Sharpless: . . . I wanted to ask you, when did you become conscious of—of race?

Malone-Mayes: I can't remember exactly how old I was. But my first recollection, I know was in Montgomery Ward on Fourth and Austin. And I remember that there were two water fountains and I wanted a drink of water. And I was—I've always been frisky. And I ran to it. I couldn't read. I remember that because that's why my mother had to come and grab me, you know. I went to the wrong fountain and was drinking when my mother grabbed me and pushed me over to the other fountain. And I could tell that she was quite alarmed and—and afraid. And that's when she explained to me and made me learn the word "colored" and "white," where I wouldn't make that mistake again. It was—I could tell she was afraid. And I remember asking her later why is this? And she seemed to accept it. My mother's not the kind like I am. She's not very excitable. And she's not very, um, dogmatic like I am, I guess. And she just explained to me this is the way the world was and we had to accept it, and there was nothing we could do about it. And we had just simply learn how to adjust to it. That was the essence of what she was saying. And I did. I just accepted it and I didn't feel bad about it. . . .

I also remembered that Waco was not bad in a sense as Dallas. For example, we could go downtown and try on shoes. In R. E. Cox, you really felt that the ladies waited on you and treated my mother with respect. They would call her Mrs. Malone. She was a school teacher and I guess that's why, I don't know. But we had no problems trying on clothes.

Sharpless: You were allowed to try on clothes?

Malone-Mayes: Yes, we had—this is in Waco. And this is why when we shopped in Dallas one time, we were horrified when they gave us shoes and wanted us to go to the back room, to the supply room, to try them on. Didn't want to see us try them on in front of the store. We knew, of course, we weren't admitted to the Neiman-Marcus in Dallas. So we didn't try that at all because we knew blacks were not admitted. . . .

Sharpless: How late was that?

Malone-Mayes: [Nineteen] fifty-four, '54 and '55. After all, it was in the sixties that she began to have—and yes, maybe '59. It was in the sixties, early sixties, that you would begin to have your—your—and maybe '59—your sit-ins and everything, all that other stuff. And

then it took a long time to break open in Dallas even at that. But Waco was just a different atmosphere in shopping. They had the water fountains. Bathrooms were bad. And you had—if they had a bathroom for you at all, it was separate and usually you couldn't hardly go to the bathroom. Filling stations were terrible all over the state. You couldn't—you had to make it. If they didn't have a black bathroom, a bathroom for blacks, you tried to find a filling station that did. And, of course, no hotel facilities, which meant that black people had to develop almost a network. You always knew because of this oppression, if you went to a town—this is when I was traveling—but people didn't travel that much. But even if they—we did go on a trip, if it was overnight and you had to stay somewhere, you knew to go to the black community and look for a minister or just anyone like that. They would find a house where you could spend—you could have lodging and meals for the night. My aunt kept many people like this when they would have state teachers' conventions, black state teachers. And those conventions would be large. And one of the big duties of the committee would be to find housing for the delegates and the people coming to the convention. And they lived in people's homes. And people enjoyed having them, too, because they got to make a little money. And—

Sharpless: So you would pay for this.

Malone-Mayes: Oh, yes, you paid. But it was very reasonable, very cheap, comparatively, I imagine, if it had been somewhere else. And you would more or less eat with the family at the time the family would eat. But the first hotel I ever remember staying in was a black hotel in Memphis, Tennessee. And it was terrible. I mean, the springs looked like—we were right on top of the springs. There was no mattress on it anymore, because black people just didn't stay in hotels that much. You always had some friends wherever you stopped or, as I said, you went to some black professional. It could be even the undertaker—anybody that was considered not elite, but just responsible. And they would guide you or direct you to a place that would be comfortable, clean, and where you wouldn't mind staying.

Sharpless: So you were aware of discrimination from the time you were tiny.

Malone-Mayes: Oh, yes. I couldn't read so I had to be very tiny, because I know I was reading when I left Joyce Stamps Nursery school when I was five years old. So I had to be very tiny.

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Malone-Mayes: . . . About the only little courting we got to do from seventh grade on was my mother permitted me to go to the movies every Monday after school. Maybe not every Monday, but almost every Monday. Because my other little friends who were also teachers' children got to go to the movies on Monday after school. And I tell you that was the biggest courting place in the world. That was the only time you could get to kiss any little boy or do anything, hug up or anything. And then we had what you call pig Latin, and when you walked in through the back you couldn't—it was so dark in those movies you couldn't see a thing for a while; you were adjusting. And if you were up there all squeezed up with your

little boyfriend, kids all looked out for each other. If your mother came through the door, by the time she hit the back door the word had come down through pig Latin that your mother was on your—Vivienne's mother's on her way down. And the only place where that didn't work well was up at the Rex Theatre. That was at Fourth and Austin. And the balcony was so steep and you entered at the middle of it, and it was not as dark up there because the screen projector was right over you. So that would shed a lot of light in the balcony. So that place was not as safe as, say, the Gem Theatre, which was for blacks only.

That was the only two theaters I remember going to. Because you must remember when the war came, they stopped blacks from going to the Orpheum Theatre. They needed that extra room. Last time I remember being in the Orpheum Theatre, the war had begun and they played the "Star Spangled Banner." And I never shall forget that Dr. L. Roy Adams was in the theater that night—by himself apparently—and I was there. And evidently my family had taken me to pick me up later, because I was a very small kid, may have been nine, ten. And he and I were the only blacks who stood upstairs. All other blacks kept their seats. And when I stood and looked around and saw none of the blacks were standing, I went to sit down and he said, "Don't sit down. You're right, baby. Keep standing." And we were the only two blacks standing in the balcony. But that was their only way of protesting. I didn't realize at the time. I thought they were just being ignorant and didn't know they were supposed to stand on the national anthem, you know. But they knew because they all deliberately didn't stand.

Also, uh, the night—I was not there; this is hearsay—but the night they announced that they would not accept—let blacks enter any more, I understand the blacks had a happy-go-lucky good time spitting on all the white people down (both laugh) on the first floor. Every now and then from up there they would throw a piece of paper down there on the first floor. But for the most part they were well behaved. We were right by the projection booth. There were really two sides to the balcony. There was a white side and the black side, and the projection booth divided. And our side opened from the alley, where you never went through—you didn't get your ticket at the front office. You went through the alley door. I remember going up a couple of steps and then you'd buy your ticket, and you'd keep straight on up the steps to the balcony. Where the white people went in the balcony got their tickets the same place as those who sat on the front—front—uh, I mean on the first floor. But then they would go to the balcony with another set of steps. And I heard that black people spit balls and whatever else they had in their hands they could throw down there on them. They went wild that night. I know they were glad that was the last night, that they didn't have to announce two or three nights. They just announced it one night: you can't come back anymore and that was it. I think that door is almost bricked in by now.

Sharpless: How much did you think about this discrimination?

Malone-Mayes: When they stopped us from going to Orpheum, that really hurt. Because the best movies came to the Orpheum. You didn't get the best movies at the Gem and the other theaters. We did have—also, later on some black servicemen came, returned home, and opened up the Alpha Theater in East Waco. But you never got the first-run movies at those theaters. . . . But I remember really being hurt when they closed the Orpheum to us, because I—all my childhood we had been going to the Orpheum.

And it seems that when the war began, that's when we really felt sad, mad—I don't know what you could say. Because they were drafting black men to segregate them in a war—you see, there was just too many contradictions. A war for freedom—and here you are segregated and not allowing, giving freedom to half your soldiers. . . . But that is really when I began to be bitter about being black. Before then, my mother had said this is the way it is and you must accept it and move on and be happy in spite of it. And I was.

And then, you see, I could stay away from white people. I didn't have to come in contact with them. I didn't have to have contact with them at school even though they were in my neighborhood here. One time I remember one lady had some little children and the little boy told a tale on us. We were walking by—he ran and told his mother that we had thrown a rock at him or something. We hadn't even seen that little boy. And she came out, turned red as a beet, called us all kinds of niggers and everything else. We were little kids and we just laughed at her. We just kind of looked at her like she was some kind of crazy maniac and laughed at her, and kept on and came home. That's the only little incident I remember of having a confrontation with whites. But when that war hit and we began to hear of blacks being killed. Boy, that hurt. You mean somebody died for this country that won't even allow you to go to the movies, you know. Black soldiers were coming in and couldn't even go to the Orpheum Theatre while white soldiers were lined up to get in the Orpheum Theatre. Black soldiers coming in, having to live with black families in black neighborhoods, you know.