

Rowena Moore

Mrs. Moore was born in 1910 in Meridian, Oklahoma, a small community near the town of Langston. In 1923, her family moved to Omaha where her father got a job in the meat packing industry. He had preceded the rest of the family by a short while, and she remembers him waiting for them at the train station in South Omaha, which at that time was not yet part of the city of Omaha.

The first house they lived in was at 30th and V Streets, on L Street; "We were the only Black family that lived on L Street, it was right near where Johnny's Cafe is now, and that viaduct that goes up L Street is sitting right over where our house was." She remembers a man named Harry Norman, who had a restaurant and nightclub on 26th between

L and M. Her father did well enough in the packing house to buy a new car in 1926. In 1927, Mrs. Moore was married,

During the Second World War, many White women got jobs in the meat processing industry, but Black women were shut out. At that time, she and her husband and son lived in the Southside Terrace Apartments at 2828 R Avenue. The Black women in the apartments organized a group called the Defense Women's Club. Its purpose was to support the war effort by promoting war bonds and food rationing, to organize child care for working mothers, and to secure jobs for Black women in the packing houses.

There were Black men in the meat cutter's union, but they were unable to persuade the companies to hire Afro American women: "They would go and see what the company would say about hiring a Black woman in the Armour plant, and the superintendent told them that there'd never be a Black woman employed in the Armour plant as long as he was superintendent." Letters were written to Washington to the Fair Employment Practices Committee. Ted Poston, an FEPC official, came out to Omaha, and directed the packing houses to stop discriminating against Black women. So in 1942 Armour became the first company to break these practices by hiring Budella Moore and Emma Wilson. It was the combined pressure of the Black women, the United Packinghouse Workers, CIO, and the FEPC, that broke down jim crow in the Omaha meat packing industry.

Later, Mrs. Moore was hired, and within a short time, she became secretary of the meat cutter's local. In 1948, she was secretary of the Omaha metropolitan labor council. It was at this time that Omaha packinghouse workers went out on strike. As she remembers; "I went from picket line to picket line. ..we'd sing strike songs and pass out handbills." She also attended meetings of the city human relations office as a representative of the packinghouse workers' union. She found that some people were surprised that a meat packing worker would have enough social awareness to attend a human relations meeting. Many people, she feels had a negative impression of packinghouse workers without realizing that not infrequently, they possessed a good deal of education.

In 1971, she was elected chairwoman of the Douglas County Democratic Central Committee, and she is still active in Democratic Party politics. She is also president of the Malcolm X Memorial Foundation. Her family has owned the land which used to belong to Malcolm X's father, Early Little, and on which the house where Malcolm was born used to stand. The Memorial Foundation seeks to have the birthsite officially recognized as a historic place, and to have a building constructed on the site. Mrs. Moore has received encouragement on this project from the Mayor's office, and from the Omaha Central Labor Federation.

#### Dorothy Eure

Mrs. Eure, a native Omahan, grew up during the 1930's