

**Excerpt from “Negro Workers and Organized Labor” by Jesse O. Thomas
(September 1934)**

...[I]n so far as the different labor organizations thus benefited deny and exclude Negroes from their membership by constitutions or rituals, the position of Negro labor has been made less favorable. It was the intention of the government in passing this legislation on behalf of labor to benefit all workers. On account of the unsportsmanlike and anti-social attitude of the majority of the membership and heads of many of the unions and crafts, the position of Negroes has been made even more disadvantageous.

In the City of St. Louis, we learn that Negro laborers were forced out of employment by the threats of the American Federation of Labor-made by the Business Agent against the contractors. Jobs were picketed by Negroes and whites who were not affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. They were attacked by three car loads of American Federation of Labor representatives.

On the Homer Phillips Hospital, a new Negro municipal hospital in St. Louis, the General Tile Company employed a Negro as tile setter; whereupon all the A. F. of L. men walked off and tied up the job.

As a result an organization has been formed known as the "Allied Building Contractors Association" in St. Louis composed of both Negro and white contractors who will not limit the employment of any particular race, but will extend the employment opportunity to all people on the basis of competency and efficiency.

The Homer Phillips Hospital project has been closed and nailed up for eight weeks, according to our informant, on account of the unwillingness on the part of the membership of the American Federation of Labor to work on the same job with Negroes.

In the midst of all that is being done, by, for, with or against organized labor, the Negro stands aghast.

SOURCE: Jesse O. Thomas, “Negro Workers and Organized Labor,” *Opportunity, Journal of Negro Life* 12 (September 1934): 277. Reprinted at <http://newdeal.feri.org/opp/opp34277.htm>. Last accessed December 5, 2008.