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## **Hattie Meyers Junkin Papers - Newspaper and Journal Articles: General**

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[[photo]]  
Jesse Hill in front of the Atlanta Life building on Auburn Avenue.  
Photography by Floyd Jillson

The Atlanta Journal and Constitution Magazine  
12-11-77

in both Washington and Atlanta. He routinely is referred to as the most powerful man in Atlanta's black community, one known around the world for its prestigious inhabitants. However, at the same time, Hill's role at the chamber will bring new attention to the lack of economic opportunity that plagues the vast majority of those in the black community. For, as Hill will be the first to admit, his sort of success has been the exception far more than the rule among black people. While Hill may be seated at the titular helm of the local economy, most of his black brothers and sisters lie at its foot. Young blacks in record numbers now stand in unemployment lines. Many of their seniors, trying to make an impact as business managers, are learning the hard way that bankruptcy is more common than profit among minority-owned companies. And those joining giant corporations find the door to promotion can be extremely difficult to open.

Joseph Lowery, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, summed up the situation with one sentence during a recent interview. "We have reached a degree of political equity, but we are nowhere near economic equality." State Rep. Hosea Williams, another official of the civil rights organization, put it this way: "Black people are still on the fringe of economic life in this city." It was on just such a fringe, alongside the Mississippi River levee on the south side of St. Louis, that Jesse Hill and his one sister grew up in the home of their divorced mother and maternal grandfather. Hill's mother labored in a railroad station laundry. His grandfather operated a small retail and hauling business. "If I have any positive business instincts, I think they must have come from my grandfather," Hill recalled last month. "As a young child, I learned the fundamental principles of business sitting beside him on a horse-drawn wagon selling watermelons." After finishing at a local high school, Hill left St. Louis for Jefferson City

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