

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Bobby Rush

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Rush, Bobby L., 1946-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Bobby Rush,
Dates:	April 13, 2022, August 23, 2000, January 18, 2001 and May 15, 2014
Bulk Dates:	2000, 2001, 2014 and 2022
Physical Description:	11 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (5:27:15).
Abstract:	Political activist and U.S. congressman The Honorable Bobby Rush (1946 -) made history when he formed the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party in the late 1960s. Rush became the alderman of Chicago's Second Ward in 1983 and was then elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1992. Rush was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 13, 2022, August 23, 2000, January 18, 2001 and May 15, 2014, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2000_035
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Congressman Bobby Rush, a legendary figure in modern African American politics, exhibited extraordinary leadership long before his 1992 election to Illinois' First Congressional District. Rush was born in Albany, Georgia, in November 23, 1946, under extremely segregated conditions. Rush's family moved to Chicago in 1953, when he was seven years old.

In 1963, at the age of seventeen, Rush enlisted in the U. S. Army and served honorably until 1968. Later, Rush made history when he formed the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party after having been inspired by the activism of Stokely Carmichael and others. During this time, Rush formed the Free Medical Clinic in Chicago. It was later that Rush would confront the political establishment with a more traditional approach.

Rush ran for alderman of Chicago's Second Ward in 1975, but lost the election. Rush later won that same seat in 1983; and he continued to serve as an alderman until 1992, when he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Rush participated on the subcommittees on Telecommunications, Trade and Consumer Protections, and Energy and Power, as well as on the House Committee on Commerce. These three entities accounted for three-quarters of all national legislation. During his term, Rush served as member of the U.S. delegation of the North Atlantic Assembly, and sponsored many community-based initiatives.

In 2022, Rush announced that he would not seek reelection to the U.S. House of Representatives.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Bobby Rush was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on April 13, 2022, August 23, 2000, January 18, 2001 and May 15, 2014, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 11 Betacam SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. Political activist and U.S. congressman The Honorable Bobby Rush (1946 -) made history when he formed the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party in the late 1960s. Rush became the alderman of Chicago's Second Ward in 1983 and was then elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1992.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Rush, Bobby L., 1946-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Rush, Bobby L., 1946---Interviews

African American legislators--Illinois--Interviews

African American politicians--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

African American political activists--Illinois--Interviews

Albany (Ga.)--Social life and customs

Racism--Georgia--Albany

Chicago (Ill.)--Social conditions

Rural-urban migration--United States

United States--Armed Forces--African Americans

Civil rights movement--Illinois--Chicago

Discrimination in housing--Illinois--Chicago

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (U.S.)

Police brutality--Illinois--Chicago

Hampton, Fred, 1948-1969

Black Panther Party--People--Illinois--Chicago--1960-1970

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Black Panther Party

Illinois

Occupations:

Political Activist

U.S. Congressman

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers|PoliticalMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Bobby Rush, April 13, 2022, August 23, 2000, January 18, 2001 and May 15, 2014. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Bobby Rush, Section A2000_035_001_001, TRT: 0:30:27 ?

Congressman and civil rights activist Bobby Rush recalls his childhood in Albany Georgia and Chicago, Illinois. He describes his parents, who worked hard to improve themselves and retain their self-respect in the white supremacist society of rural Georgia. Rush remembers migrating at age seven to Chicago, Illinois; he feels thankful to his mother for deciding to move, feeling strongly that she did not want to raise black boys in the South, and he credits her with getting the kids involved in positive activities to help them transition to life in the big city. Rush talks about his childhood personality and dreams and describes fondly his working class neighborhood on Chicago's Near North Side, where blacks, Latinos, Jews, Italians, Asians and Appalachian whites lived alongside one another. Finally, he tells of a recent visit to his old neighborhood, now gentrified.

African American legislators--Illinois--Interviews.

African American politicians--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

African American political activists--Illinois--Interviews.

Albany (Ga.)--Social life and customs.

Racism--Georgia--Albany.
Chicago (Ill.)--Social conditions.
Rural-urban migration--United States.
United States--Armed Forces--African Americans.
Civil rights movements--Illinois--Chicago.
Discrimination in housing--Illinois--Chicago.
Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (U.S.).
Police brutality--Illinois--Chicago.
Hampton, Fred, 1948-1969.
Black Panther Party--People--Illinois--Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Bobby Rush, Section A2000_035_002_002,
TRT: 0:29:55 ?

Congressman and civil rights activist Bobby Rush continues to talk about his youth in Chicago in the 1950s and early 1960. He talks about his nurturing community on the Near North Side, and about the many musicians and other successful people who came from this small area. He describes very positive experiences of participation in scouting and recalls a Scoutmaster who was a great influence on many boys. After the family had moved to the West Side, Rush says he had begun drifting on what could have been a downward path, but he then made the decision to drop out of high school and enlist in the military just after his seventeenth birthday.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Bobby Rush, Section A2000_035_002_003,
TRT: 0:31:20 ?

Congressman and civil rights activist Bobby Rush talks about his service in the Army and his involvement in the Civil Rights Movement with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's Chicago branch. He discusses the Movement's shift in focus from the South to Northern cities, to targets such as police brutality and segregation in housing, and the rise of black nationalism in SNCC. Rush explains his attraction to the ideas and discipline of the Black Panther Party and details his founding of the Chicago chapter of the Panthers.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Bobby Rush, Section A2000_035_002_004,
TRT: 0:14:51 ?

Congressman and civil rights activist Bobby Rush talks about his time as Deputy Minister of Defense of the Black Panther Party, and, with Fred Hampton, a leader of the Chicago chapter. He discusses the Panthers' social programs in Chicago, including their 'Breakfast for Children' program, their medical clinic, and their efforts at educating the public about sickle cell anemia. He warmly describes Fred Hampton as "the spiritual leader of the party" and tells about Hampton's and Mark Clark's assassination in 1969 by Chicago police. Rush then describes the differing ideas of Huey Newton and Eldridge Cleaver about the Panthers' direction in the early 1970s.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Bobby Rush, Section A2000_035_003_005,
TRT: 5:32:17 ?

The Honorable Bobby Rush was a member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in Chicago, Illinois in the 1960s. In 1968, heeding the request of Stokely Carmichael, he and Bob Brown joined the Black Panther Party. Together, they established a chapter office in Chicago, although they were initially unable to secure authorization from the Central Committee of the Black Panther Party in California. However, the office was deemed an official chapter after Rush and Brown assisted two members who were being held at the Cook

County Jail. Fred Hampton became the Illinois chapter's deputy chairman while Rush served as its deputy minister of defense. In Chicago, the chapter helped establish the free breakfast for children program and the Spurgeon "Jake" Winters People's Free Medical Care Center. Following the police raid that killed Fred Hampton, the African American community in Chicago rallied to elect Republican Bernard Carey as the Cook County state's attorney and Harold Washington as mayor.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Bobby Rush, Section A2000_035_003_006, TRT: 6:27:04 ?

The Honorable Bobby Rush became the deputy minister of defense for the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party in 1968. A few days before the assassination of Fred Hampton in December of 1969, Rush and the other Illinois branch leaders of the Black Panther Party met in Chicago. They initially planned to stay at Fred Hampton's apartment on the night of the police raid, but found there was not enough space for everyone. In the days following Fred Hampton's death, Rush avoided arrest, and moved frequently between safe houses in Chicago before turning himself in at Operation Breadbasket. Rush went on to obtain his bachelor's degree from Roosevelt University in Chicago in 1972. Around this time, the Chicago chapter of the Black Panther Party developed several social welfare programs. At this point in the interview, Rush talks about the relationships between the Panthers and other organizations, such as the Nation of Islam. Rush was also instrumental in the naming of Chicago's Margaret T. Burroughs Beach.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Bobby Rush, Section A2000_035_003_007, TRT: 7:36:26 ?

The Honorable Bobby Rush served as a deputy minister in the Black Panther Party under the leadership of national co-founder Huey P. Newton in the early 1970s. Around this time, Rush helped organize the free breakfast for children program in Chicago, Illinois; and received his bachelor's degree from Roosevelt University. Rush concluded his membership with the Black Panther Party in 1974, as the local group became more susceptible to violence and drug dealing. Inspired by the career of Ralph Metcalfe, Rush then decided to pursue electoral politics. In 1982, after a series of unsuccessful campaigns, Rush was elected as the alderman of Chicago's 2nd Ward, where he served for nine years. Rush also campaigned for Harold Washington, who became the mayor of Chicago in 1983. At this point in the interview, he reflects upon Harold Washington's leadership; and the philosophy of the Black Panther Party, which ascribed to the Marxist theory of dialectical materialism.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Bobby Rush, Section A2000_035_004_008, TRT: 8:32:16 ?

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Bobby Rush, Section A2000_035_004_009, TRT: 9:29:10 ?

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Bobby Rush, Section A2000_035_004_010, TRT: 10:34:01 ?

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Bobby Rush, Section A2000_035_004_011, TRT: 11:29:28 ?

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Bobby Rush, Section A2000_035_BOBBY_RUSH_06_MED_002, TRT: 0:00:30

This tape contains a PSA from SCTN Teleproductions, in which Booby Rush speaks on behalf of early childhood education for the organization TCI of Illinois, Inc.

