

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Jerry Washington

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Washington, Jerry, 1940-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Jerry Washington,
Dates:	August 9, 2000
Bulk Dates:	2000
Physical Description:	3 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:27:23).
Abstract:	State representative The Honorable Jerry Washington (1940 - 2020) represented the 24th District in the Illinois General Assembly, serving as a member of the House Committees on Appropriation, Election, Revenue and others. He was also a member of the 84th General Assembly Special Education Task Force. Washington was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 9, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2000_062
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Jerry Washington was born on December 23, 1940 in Merrigold, Mississippi. He moved with his family to the Chicago area and attended Bloom Township High School in Chicago Heights and Dunbar Vocational High School in Chicago. Upon graduating from high school, Washington attended Wilson Junior College (now Kennedy-King College) and Northwestern University.

After marrying Ella Willoughby and starting a family, Washington was forced to hold two jobs while continuing his education. During the early 1960s, Washington became involved with the Young Republicans Organization, primarily because his father was a Republican precinct captain. He ran for elective office in 1972, but was unsuccessful. Meanwhile, he worked as a marketing group consultant for Blue Cross Blue Shield Insurance. In 1984, Washington was elected to represent the 24th District in the Illinois General Assembly. In that role, Washington served as a member of the House Committees on Appropriation, Election, Revenue and others. He was also a member of the 84th General Assembly Special Education Task Force. During his term in office, Washington was the recipient of several awards and commendations.

Washington was one of the few Republicans in the Legislative Black Caucus, often working with and supporting his black Democratic counterparts. For instance, his cooperative efforts with Democratic Senator Howard Brookins resulted in the expansion of the DuSable Museum of African American History. Washington's final act in the state legislature was to work for passage of a joint House/Senate resolution that created housing for retired Illinois veterans. Several other challenges plagued Washington during and after his tenure in office. In 1987, he suffered a brain aneurysm while driving, luckily recovering after being in a coma for two weeks. Ten years later, a brain tumor was operated on, but was found to be benign. Washington has also suffered from diabetes for most of his life.

Washington and his wife, Ella, have seven children and ten grandchildren. An outspoken advocate for educational reform, Washington has served as a consultant for 21st Century V.O.T.E. and currently serves as a member of the Englewood Local School Council.

Washington was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 9, 2000.

Washington passed away on November 9, 2020.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Jerry Washington was conducted by Adele Hodge on August 9, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 3 Betacame SP videocassettes. State representative The Honorable Jerry Washington (1940 - 2020) represented the 24th District in the Illinois General Assembly, serving as a member of the House Committees on Appropriation, Election, Revenue and others. He was also a member of the 84th General Assembly Special Education Task Force.

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:

Washington, Jerry, 1940-

Hodge, Adele (Interviewer)

Haynes, Frank (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Washington, Jerry, 1940---Interviews

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

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Illinois

Occupations:

State Representative

HistoryMakers® Category:

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 Jerry Washington, August 9, 2000. 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 Jerry Washington, Section A2000_062_001_001, TRT: 0:30:11 ?

Jerry Washington talks about his family history. His mother, Willie May Washington, was born to Peter and Sarah Cook. His father, Jerry Washington, Sr., owned a farm in Mississippi prior to moving his family to Chicago Heights, Illinois in the early 1940s. Active in the community and church, Washington's parents were affiliated with the Republican Party. After overcoming academic struggles in elementary school, Washington graduated from Bloom High School and attended Wilson Junior College [now Kennedy King College] for two years while holding two jobs and raising a family. He also attended Northwestern University for one semester before deciding to enter politics.

African American families--History.

Northwestern University (Evanston, Ill.).

Kennedy-King College (Chicago, Ill.).

African American parents--Illinois--Chicago.

Education--Illinois.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Jerry Washington, Section A2000_062_001_002, TRT: 0:28:55 ?

Jerry Washington became active in the Republican Party as a young man in the 1960s and learned how politics worked through firsthand experience. Washington chronicles his difficult political journey in the 1970s as he unsuccessfully ran for state representative in Illinois. Washington lost to the deceased candidate J. Horace Gardner in the 1972 primary for state representative. Despite strong Republican support in 1974 and his brother filing an objection, Washington did not appear on the ballot. Working on behalf of Harold Washington's Senate campaign in 1978, Cecil Partee did not deliver the votes Washington needed to win that election. Washington claims that he became a savvy politician due to these defeats.

Partee, Cecil A., 1921-

African American politicians--Illinois--Chicago.

Republican Party (U.S. : 1854-).

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Jerry Washington, Section A2000_062_001_003, TRT: 0:28:17 ?

Jerry Washington reflects upon his political and professional career. During his one term as an Illinois State Representative between 1985 and 1987, Washington sponsored a bill to expand DuSable Museum of African American History and was instrumental in developing a Joint House Senate Resolution to provide housing for homeless veterans. Having survived a near fatal car accident, a brain tumor, and chronic diabetes, Washington became involved with the local school council. Washington concludes by encouraging young people to focus on education and form coalitions to improve their communities.

DuSable Museum of African American History.

Illinois. General Assembly. House of Representatives.

African American leadership.

Vocational guidance.

Traffic accidents.

Mentoring.

Political campaigns--Illinois.