

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with James Forman

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Forman, James, 1928-2005
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with James Forman,
Dates:	April 26, 2001
Bulk Dates:	2001
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:00:46).
Abstract:	Civil rights activist and nonprofit chief executive James Forman (1928 - 2005) served as SNCC's executive secretary from 1964 to 1966 and then as president of the Unemployment and Poverty Action Committee. Since 1968, Forman has published several books, including Sammy Younge, Jr., The Making of Black Revolutionaries and Liberation Viendra d'une Chose Noir. Forman passed away on January 10, 2005. Forman was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 26, 2001, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2001_033
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civil rights activist and organizer James Forman was born on October 4, 1928, in Chicago. He spent much of his childhood with his grandmother on a farm in Marshall County, Mississippi. His grandmother stressed the importance of education and his experiences in the segregated South proved very important in his developing social consciousness.

Forman completed high school in 1947. He attended Chicago's Wilson Junior College before joining the U.S. Air Force. After completing four years of military service, Forman enrolled at the University of Southern California. At the beginning of his second semester, Forman was beaten and arrested by the police. He then transferred to Chicago's Roosevelt University where he became a leader in student politics. Forman graduated in 1957 and attended Boston University as a graduate student.

During the late 1950s, Forman gradually became involved in the budding Civil Rights Movement. In 1958, he traveled to Little Rock, Arkansas, to cover the school desegregation crisis for the Chicago Defender. In 1960, he joined the Congress of Racial Equality, providing relief services to sharecroppers in Tennessee who had been evicted for registering to vote. That same year, he met several of the Freedom Riders, who in turn asked Forman to work with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. In 1961, Forman moved south, joined SNCC, and began working full time for the Civil Rights Movement.

Forman's organizational skills, as well as his maturity and experience, thrust him into a leadership role at SNCC, where he supervised staff and directed fundraising. He served as SNCC's executive secretary from 1964 to 1966. Forman left SNCC in 1968 to assist in increasing the economic development opportunities for black communities.

Remaining an activist, Forman served as president of the Unemployment and Poverty Action Committee. He later returned to academia, obtaining his M.A. degree from Cornell University in 1980 and his Ph.D. from the Union of Experimental Colleges and Universities.

Since 1968, Forman has published several books, including Sammy Younge, Jr., *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*; *Liberation Viendra d'une Chose Noir*; *The Political Thought of James Forman*; and *Self-Determination: An Examination of the Question & its Application to the African-American People*.

Forman passed away on January 10, 2005.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with James Forman was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on April 26, 2001, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civil rights activist and nonprofit chief executive James Forman (1928 - 2005) served as SNCC's executive secretary from 1964 to 1966 and then as president of the Unemployment and Poverty Action Committee. Since 1968, Forman has published several books, including Sammy Younge, Jr., *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* and *Liberation Viendra d'une Chose Noir*. Forman passed away on January 10, 2005.

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:

Forman, James, 1928-2005

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Bieschke, Paul (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Forman, James, 1928-2005--Interviews

African American civic leaders--Interviews.

African American executives--Interviews.

African Americans--Relations with Indians.

Discrimination--Illinois--Chicago--Religious aspects.

Racism--Mississippi.

Segregation--Illinois--Chicago.

United States. Air Force--African Americans.

Roosevelt University--Alumni and alumnae--Interviews.

Discrimination in higher education--Massachusetts--Boston.

Drake, St. Clair.

Freedom Rides, 1961.

Civil rights demonstrations--North Carolina--Greensboro.

Civil rights movements.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (U.S.)

Occupations:

Civil Rights Activist

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 James Forman, April 26, 2001. 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 James Forman, Section A2001_033_001_001, TRT: 0:30:44 ?

James Forman talks about his parents' backgrounds and his stepfather's Native American ancestry. Forman then recalls being confronted with racial discrimination as a young boy, and his early desire to become socially conscious. He then details his Catholic school experiences in Chicago where he was discriminated against because he was a Protestant. Lastly, Forman describes the neighborhood of his youth that was violent and racially divided.

African American civic leaders--Interviews.

African American executives--Interviews.

African Americans--Relations with Indians.

Religious discrimination--Illinois--Chicago.

Racism--Mississippi.

Segregation--Illinois--Chicago.

United States. Air Force--African Americans.

Roosevelt University--Alumni and alumnae--Interviews.
Discrimination in higher education--Massachusetts--Boston.
Drake, St. Clair.
Freedom Rides, 1961.
Civil rights demonstrations--North Carolina--Greensboro.
Civil rights movements.

Video Oral History Interview with James Forman, Section A2001_033_001_002, TRT: 0:29:48 ?

James Forman recalls his years at Englewood High School in Chicago and his desire to attend college. Forman then talks about his enlistment in the U.S. Air Force in order to pay for college. He then details his admittance to a mental institution against his will while a student at the University of Southern California. Upon returning to Chicago, Forman fondly recalls his activities and experiences at the Roosevelt University. Lastly, Forman describes a racial confrontation with a professor while attending graduate school at Boston University.

Video Oral History Interview with James Forman, Section A2001_033_001_003, TRT: 0:29:42 ?

James Forman describes his relationship with his and mentor, St. Clair Drake. Forman discusses the forces that influenced his involvement with the Civil Rights Movement. Forman details his activities with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), discussing the organization's strategies for fighting segregation in the South, including the sit-ins at Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Freedom Rides through Mississippi.

Video Oral History Interview with James Forman, Section A2001_033_001_004, TRT: 0:30:32 ?

James Forman talks extensively about the power struggle that occurred within the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and his removal from the organization. Forman then discusses the progress made towards racial equality after the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. He comments on what it takes to organize a movement, and lastly, Forman ponders what his legacy might be.

Video Oral History Interview with James Forman, Section A2001_033_001_005, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Video Oral History Interview with James Forman, Section A2001_033_001_006, TRT: 0:30:00 ?