

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Wellington Webb

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Webb, Wellington E.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Wellington Webb,
Dates:	June 20, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002
Physical Description:	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:25:38).
Abstract:	Mayor and state representative The Honorable Wellington Webb (1941 -) is a former Colorado State Representative and the first African American mayor of Denver. During his administration, there was a record forty percent decrease in crime, and unemployment dipped below two percent. Webb's development projects include the new Denver International Airport, a new sports stadium, expansion of the Denver Art Museum and a new African American research library. Webb was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 20, 2002, in Denver, Colorado. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2002_123
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Wellington E. Webb, the first African American Mayor of Denver, was born on February 17, 1941, in Chicago. The Webb family relocated to the Northeast section of Denver, where the imposing six-foot, five-inch youth became active in sports. Webb was an all-conference basketball player at Northeastern Junior College in Sterling, Colorado, in 1960. He obtained his B.A. in sociology from Colorado State College at Greeley in 1964 and his M.A. in sociology from the University of Northern Colorado at Greeley in 1971.

Webb was turned down twice for teaching positions in the Denver public schools. He was working as a forklift operator when he sought advice from his grandmother, Helen M. Gamble, who was active in the community affairs of northeast Denver. Following her advice, he went to city hall and was offered a job. She taught Webb about political involvement and political clout. Webb's political career had begun.

In 1972, Webb was elected to the Colorado House of Representatives, representing his boyhood home in northeast Denver. In 1977, Webb was selected by President Jimmy Carter to serve as regional director of the U.S. Department of Health Education and Welfare. In 1981, Colorado Governor Richard Lamm appointed Webb to his cabinet as executive director of the Department of Regulatory Agencies. Webb was elected Denver city auditor in 1987, where his track record paved the way for his successful and historic mayoral bid in 1991.

In his three terms as mayor of Denver, Webb has focused on four major areas: parks and open space, public safety, economic development and children. During his administration there was a record forty percent decrease in crime, as unemployment dipped below two percent. Webb's development projects include the new Denver International

Airport, a new sports stadium, expansion of the Denver Art Museum and a new African American research library.

Webb is president of the Democratic Mayors and the past president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors and National Conference of Black Mayors. He lectures frequently on civic issues and was a guest lecturer at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. Webb collaborates closely with his wife, former Colorado State Representative Wilma J. Webb.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Wellington Webb was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on June 20, 2002, in Denver, Colorado, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Mayor and state representative The Honorable Wellington Webb (1941 -) is a former Colorado State Representative and the first African American mayor of Denver. During his administration, there was a record forty percent decrease in crime, and unemployment dipped below two percent. Webb's development projects include the new Denver International Airport, a new sports stadium, expansion of the Denver Art Museum and a new African American research library.

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:

Webb, Wellington E.

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Webb, Wellington E. --Interviews

African American mayors--Colorado--Denver--Interviews

African American legislators--Colorado--Interviews

African American politicians--Colorado--Interviews

Children of divorced parents--United States

Chicago (Ill.)--Social life and customs

Gary (Ind.)--Social life and customs

Denver (Colo.)--Social life and customs

Colorado State University

Colorado. General Assembly. Senate

Elections--United States--Colorado

Carter, Jimmy, 1924-

Presidents--United States--Election--1976

United States. Dept. of Health and Human Services

Campaign finance

Campaign management

Denver International Airport

Criminal statistics--Colorado--Denver

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Colorado

Denver (Colo.)

Occupations:

State Representative

Mayor

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 Wellington Webb, June 20, 2002.
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 Wellington Webb, Section
A2002_123_001_001, TRT: 0:30:14 ?

Mayor of Denver Wellington Webb begins by describing his family background.
He describes his parents and their personalities and explains how asthma and

divorce affected his childhood. He discusses his early childhood in Chicago and Gary, Indiana, describing the neighborhoods and communities in which he grew up and telling of his favorite childhood activities.

African American mayors--Colorado--Denver--Interviews.

African American legislators--Colorado--Interviews.

African American politicians--Colorado--Interviews.

Children of divorced parents--United States.

Chicago (Ill.)--Social life and customs.

Gary (Ind.)--Social life and customs.

Denver (Colo.)--Social life and customs.

Colorado State University.

Colorado. General Assembly. Senate.

Elections--United States--Colorado.

Carter, Jimmy, 1924-.

Presidents--United States--Election--1976.

United States. Dept. of Health and Human Services.

Campaign finance.

Campaign management.

Denver International Airport.

Criminal statistics--Colorado--Denver.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Wellington Webb, Section
A2002_123_001_002, TRT: 0:31:02 ?

Wellington Webb details his environs while growing up in Chicago, Illinois. Webb explains his family's move to Denver and compares the two cities. Webb describes young adulthood in Denver and his laissez-faire attitude towards his education. Webb talks about going to college at Colorado State University, and explains that he was unable to find a suitable job after earning his degree.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Wellington Webb, Section
A2002_123_001_003, TRT: 0:31:04 ?

Wellington Webb continues to discuss his career path, explaining how his work with community organizations inspired him to continue in public service. Webb talks about teaching black studies at Colorado University while earning his master's degree and then running for Colorado state representative with the help of students in his classes. Webb details his early years in the state legislature and credits his grandmother for being his political inspiration.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Wellington Webb, Section
A2002_123_001_004, TRT: 0:31:07 ?

Wellington Webb continues to describe his tenure in the Colorado legislature, explaining his emphasis on making himself accessible to constituents and recalling his strategies for passing bills. Webb then discusses his work on Jimmy Carter's presidential campaign and details his work for the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in Washington, D.C. Webb also details his wife Wilma's success in creating the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday in Colorado and explains why he tired of state legislative work.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Wellington Webb, Section
A2002_123_001_005, TRT: 0:30:55 ?

Wellington Webb discusses his first work for the city as the city auditor, and explains how this experience contributed to his decision to run for mayor. Webb

details his mayoral campaign, discussing his political and fundraising strategies, explaining how he raised awareness for his campaign by walking across the city and staying in different houses for forty-two straight nights. Webb shares memories from his day of victory in 1991, when he was elected with fifty-eight percent of the vote.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Wellington Webb, Section A2002_123_001_006, TRT: 0:31:18 ?

Wellington Webb describes his accomplishments in his first term as mayor and then talks about his successful re-election campaign in 1995. Webb discusses his accomplishments as mayor, including lowering crime rates, stimulating the economy, building a new international airport, and promoting cultural institutions. Finally, Webb reflects on the difficulty of his first campaign and considers his legacy.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Wellington Webb, Section A2002_123_001_007, TRT: 0:19:58 ?

Wellington Webb recalls his struggle to build Denver International Airport and discusses opposition from the city council. He then considers his future, both politically and personally, and reflects on how the black community has supported him during his campaigns. Finally, Webb reflects on his life and career and remembers his inspirational grandmother.