

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Reverend Walter Fauntroy

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Fauntroy, Walter E.
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Walter Fauntroy,
<b>Dates:</b>	January 23, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003
<b>Physical Description:</b>	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:28:50).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Civil rights leader, U.S. congressman, and pastor The Honorable Reverend Walter Fauntroy (1933 - ) represented the citizens of District of Columbia in the U.S. Congress. Prior to this, he served as director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and coordinated several historic civil rights marches, including from Selma to Montgomery in 1965. Fauntroy was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 23, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_016
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

The Reverend Walter Edward Fauntroy was born in Washington, D.C., on February 6, 1933, to Ethel Vine and William T. Fauntroy. Graduating from Virginia Union University with a B.A. in 1955 and from Yale University Divinity School with a B.D. in 1958. The following year he became pastor of his childhood church, New Bethel Baptist Church in Washington, D.C, where he still serves as pastor.

In 1961, Fauntroy was appointed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as director of the Washington Bureau of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He then worked as the Washington, D.C., coordinator of the historic 1963 March on Washington and directed the 1965 Selma to Montgomery March, the 1966 Meredith Mississippi Freedom March, and the 1983 20th Anniversary March on Washington. In 1966, Fauntroy founded and served as the president of the Model Inner City Community Organization, a group committed to community development and neighborhood development.

In 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed Fauntroy vice chairman of the White House's "To Fulfill These Rights" conference. One year later, Johnson appointed him vice chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia, and in 1971 Fauntroy was elected as the District of Columbia's delegate to Congress. He served ten terms in this role and designed and engineered many significant changes in national public policy. He was also one of the founding members of the Congressional Black Caucus. Fauntroy served for six years, as chair of the Subcommittee on International Development, Finance, Trade and Monetary Policy while he was member of the House Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs Committee. In 1977 Fauntroy founded the National Black Leadership Roundtable for leaders of National African American organizations. Fauntroy was chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus Brain Trust on Black Voter Participation and Network Development.

In 1984, Fauntroy was arrested at the South African Embassy as part of the Free South Africa Movement. Fauntroy is married to Dorothy Simms and they have two children: Marvin Keith and Melissa Alice.

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# Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Reverend Walter Fauntroy was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on January 23, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civil rights leader, U.S. congressman, and pastor The Honorable Reverend Walter Fauntroy (1933 - ) represented the citizens of District of Columbia in the U.S. Congress. Prior to this, he served as director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and coordinated several historic civil rights marches, including from Selma to Montgomery in 1965.

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# 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®.

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# 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.

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# Controlled Access Terms

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

## Persons:

Fauntroy, Walter E.

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Fauntroy, Walter E.--Interviews

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African American clergy--Interviews

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African American civic leaders--Interviews

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African American civil rights workers--Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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Southern Christian Leadership Conference

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Washington (D.C.)

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## Occupations:

Civil Rights Leader

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U.S. Congressman

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Pastor

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers|PoliticalMakers|ReligionMakers

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## 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 Reverend Walter Fauntroy, January 23, 2003. 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Walter Fauntroy, Section  
A2003\_016\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Walter Fauntroy was born on February 6, 1933 to Ethel Vine Fauntroy and William Fauntroy in Washington, D.C. Neither of his parents graduated from high school. His mother was born in Washington, D.C. though her family was originally from Hyattsville, Maryland. She married young and raised eight children. Fauntroy remembers his mother as “the essence of love”. Fauntroy’s father was born in Washington, D.C. with ancestral roots in Virginia. He worked as clerk in the federal government where he trained generations of white supervisors without ever being promoted to support his family. To relieve stress, Fauntroy’s father would play the lottery and get high. Fauntroy reflects upon memories of growing up during World War II including his brother Billy Fauntroy’s enlistment in the U.S. Army Air Force. Other memories include his childhood neighborhood, his first day of kindergarten at Archibald H. Grimke Elementary School, playing the numbers, becoming a Cub Scout, and competing in the soap box derby.

African American clergy--Interviews.

African American civic leaders--Interviews.

African American civil rights workers--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Walter Fauntroy, Section  
A2003\_016\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:45 ?

Walter Fauntroy was raised in the Washington, D.C.’s second precinct, home to the area’s highest crime and drug rates. He went to segregated schools: Grimke Elementary School, Garnet-Patterson Junior High School, and Dunbar High School. In high school, Fauntroy built soapbox cars before competing in oratorical contests where his experience of racial discrimination taught him that he needed to surpass standards for white students to be recognized. Early on, he was identified as a future minister by his mentor, Reverend C. David Foster, at New Bethel Baptist Church. Fauntroy’s desire to become a minister was cemented by a brother’s near-death experience. The church raised money to support Fauntroy’s studies at Virginia Union University and Yale Divinity School. At Virginia Union, he was influenced by African American theologians Vernon Johns and Howard Thurman. Fauntroy also met his wife, Dorothy Simms. Foster passed away after Fauntroy graduated from divinity school in 1958, and Fauntroy assumed his pastorate.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Walter Fauntroy, Section  
A2003\_016\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:35 ?

Walter Fauntroy grew up watching black entertainers like Nat King Cole, Moms

Mabley, Louis Armstrong, and the Clovers at the Howard Theatre in Washington, D.C. He did not experience much racial discrimination until he became a student at Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia in 1951. There, Fauntroy met Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and was influenced by people like Howard Thurman, Vernon Johns, Virgil Wood, Samuel DeWitt Proctor, and HistoryMakers L. Douglas Wilder and Rev. Wyatt Tee Walker. Fauntroy describes the school and how his experience there prepared him for his studies at Yale Divinity School. Throughout his life, Fauntroy faced discrimination as a black man, an athlete, a singer, and a politician. After graduating from Yale in 1958, Fauntroy succeeded Rev. C. David Foster at New Bethel Baptist Church. In 1961, he was appointed by Rev. Dr. King as the director of SCLC's Washington Bureau. He describes his role in the Albany Movement, the Freedom Rides, and the 1963 March on Washington.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Walter Fauntroy, Section A2003\_016\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Walter Fauntroy talks about the 1963 March on Washington and the tensions between Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other movement leaders leading up to the March. Fauntroy chronicles the ups and downs of The Civil Rights Movement like the March on Washington and the Birmingham Church Bombing in 1963, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, making parallels to the Free South Africa Movement. He talks about the SCLC and the dissension between ministers. Discord with students like HistoryMakers John Lewis and Marion Barry led to the formation of SNCC. In 1964, Fauntroy, Dr. King, Ralph Abernathy, and HistoryMaker Andrew Young met with President Lyndon B. Johnson to secure voting rights. Johnson's response catalyzed the Selma to Montgomery Marches in 1965 initially led by Hosea Williams and John Lewis on Bloody Sunday. Fauntroy talks about President Johnson and Robert Kennedy's contributions to The Civil Rights Movement. He describes his church's support and his memory of Dr. King's assassination.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Walter Fauntroy, Section A2003\_016\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:15 ?

Walter Fauntroy was appointed to the White House Conference on Civil Rights by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1966. After the conference, James Meredith was murdered and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. asked Fauntroy to organize the continuation of the March Against Fear. In 1967, Fauntroy was appointed Vice Chairman of the D.C. City Council. He accepted the position despite tensions with the Johnson administration after Rev. Dr. King's "Beyond Vietnam" speech. After Dr. King's assassination, Fauntroy investigated FBI negligence on a congressional subcommittee. As an SCLC organizer for the Poor People's Campaign, Fauntroy witnessed the collective depression of the movement after the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, Dr. King, and Robert Kennedy. He talks about black voter engagement and his decision to run for a seat on the U.S. Congress. He also talks about the Voter Education Project, the first Congressional Black Caucus, and President Richard Nixon's impact on progressive policies.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Walter Fauntroy, Section A2003\_016\_001\_006, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Walter Fauntroy talks about President Jimmy Carter's recognition of black politicians and some key political appointments. The black community's support of Carter diminished after HistoryMaker Andrew Young left his post as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations in 1977. Fauntroy was Washington, D.C.'s delegate to Congress from 1971 to 1990. He was unable to vote on the House

floor, but he chaired committees and used his position to communicate with movement participants nationwide. In 1978, HistoryMaker Marion Barry became the second mayor of Washington, D.C. Fauntroy describes Barry's economic reforms and the effective increase in city contracts given to African Americans. He also describes how the fiscal policies of the President Ronald Reagan administration increased national income inequality. To combat disillusionment in the black electorate, Fauntroy focused on increasing voter registration. He believes that the state of the black community has declined and comments on problems facing the community.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Walter Fauntroy, Section A2003\_016\_001\_007, TRT: 0:23:45 ?

Walter Fauntroy describes the role of the black church in the community and the importance of increasing black voter turnout. He believes that all people should advocate for equality and justice regardless of their race or religious background. He reflects on his hopes and concerns for the African American community, what he hopes to accomplish, and how he would like to be remembered. Fauntroy's mother, Ethel Vine Fauntroy lived to see Fauntroy become a member of the U.S. Congress as a delegate for Washington, D.C. Fauntroy reviews the findings of the Subcommittee on the Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr, which resulted in the discovery of J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI's efforts to dismantle Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s impact. He also discusses the future of civil rights and the significance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Walter Fauntroy, Section A2003\_016\_001\_008, TRT: 0:08:40 ?

Walter Fauntroy narrates his photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Walter Fauntroy, Section A2003\_016\_REV\_WALTER\_EDWARD\_FAUNTROY\_06\_MED\_001, TRT: 0:01:04 ?

This tape contains clips from Rev. Walter Fauntroy's interview with The HistoryMakers.