

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Benjamin Hooks

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Hooks, Benjamin L. (Benjamin Lawson), 1925-2010
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Benjamin Hooks,
Dates:	July 24, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:59:05).
Abstract:	Association executive Reverend Benjamin Hooks (1925 - 2010) was CEO of the NAACP for fifteen years. Hooks was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 24, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_168
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Association executive Reverend Benjamin L. Hooks was born in Memphis, Tennessee, on January 31, 1925. At an early age, Hooks was inspired to excel in his education, largely due to the influence of his grandmother, who was the second black woman in the United States to graduate from college. Hooks's education took him to LeMoyne College in Tennessee, which he attended from 1941 to 1943. In 1943, Hooks transferred to Howard University and joined the Army, where he guarded Italian prisoners of war. Graduating from Howard in 1944, Hooks went to DePaul University in Chicago for his J.D. degree, completing the program in 1948.

Facing racism everywhere he went, Hooks began to fight to change the problems he encountered. Hooks returned to Memphis after law school and set up his own practice, quickly establishing a reputation for himself. After joining the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Hooks was ordained as a minister in 1956, and began preaching, in addition to his duties as a lawyer. In 1965, after a few failed election bids, Hooks was appointed to fill a vacancy on the Tennessee criminal court judicial bench, becoming the first African American to serve on the criminal court in Tennessee. Never one to slow down, Hooks also produced several television shows in the area, and his support of President Richard Nixon brought about his appointment as the first African American on the Federal Communications Commission in 1972. When Hooks left the FCC, he was almost immediately voted in to serve as the executive director of the NAACP, where he served from 1977 until 1992. In the early 1990s, Hooks and his family were among the targets of a series of racially motivated bombings; these events, combined with the difficult task of managing an organization the size of the NAACP, led him to retire. Following his departure from the NAACP, Hooks taught at Fisk University as a professor of social justice.

Later on, the University of Memphis established the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change, to house symposia and archives on civil rights. Hooks was awarded several honorary degrees and human rights awards, and was honored by Congress. Hooks and his wife, Frances, were married in 1951; the couple raised one child. On March 24, 2001, Benjamin and Frances Hooks renewed their wedding vows to celebrate nearly fifty years of marriage. Hooks passed away on April 15, 2010.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reverend Benjamin Hooks was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 24, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Association executive Reverend Benjamin Hooks (1925 - 2010) was CEO of the NAACP for fifteen years.

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:

Hooks, Benjamin L. (Benjamin Lawson), 1925-2010

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Hooks, Benjamin L. (Benjamin Lawson), 1925-2010--Interviews

African American clergy--Interviews

African American executives--Interviews

African American civil rights workers--Interviews

African American judges--Interviews

Memphis (Tenn.)

Childhood.

Great Depression

Beale Street (Memphis, Tenn.)

Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Franklin Delano), 1882-1945

Great Depression and the New Deal

New Deal, 1933-1939.

African American families

African American youth

African American young men

College students--United States

United States--Armed Forces--African Americans

Segregation

Public speaking.

Speech anxiety.

Shelby County (Tenn.)

Nixon, Richard M. (Richard Milhous), 1913-1994

United States. Federal Communications Commission

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Occupations:

Association Executive

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 Reverend Benjamin Hooks, July 24, 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).

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 Reverend Benjamin Hooks, Section A2003_168_001_001, TRT: 0:31:15 ?

Benjamin Hooks shares many delightful and thoughtful memories of his childhood in the 1920s and 1930s in Memphis, Tennessee. He describes life

during the Great Depression and its effect upon his family. Hook's father was an entrepreneur and owned a photographer's studio on Beale Street. The family faced hard times during the Great Depression and Hooks describes the influence President Franklin Roosevelt and his New Deal policies had upon his father and siblings and how it shaped his views that the good government could do for its citizens.

African American clergy--Interviews.

African American executives--Interviews.

African American civil rights workers--Interviews.

African American judges--Interviews.

Memphis (Tenn.).

Children.

Depressions--1929.

Beale Street (Memphis, Tenn.).

Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Franklin Delano), 1882-1945.

New Deal, 1933-1939.

African American women--Periodicals.

African American youth.

African American young men.

College students--United States.

United States--Armed Forces--African Americans.

Segregation.

Public speaking.

Speech anxiety.

Shelby County (Tenn.).

Nichols, Brian.

United States. Federal Communications Commission.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Benjamin Hooks, Section A2003_168_001_002, TRT: 0:28:45 ?

Benjamin Hooks recounts his secondary school years and values the superior education he received. He learned Latin, poetry, and trigonometry. Hooks describes his collegiate life and life after being drafted in the Army. Hooks remembers most pointedly having to guard Italian prisoners of war who could dine in a restaurant, that he, as black American, could not. Hooks also details his calling into the ministry in 1955 and how preaching helped him overcome a deep-seated fear of public speaking.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Benjamin Hooks, Section A2003_168_001_003, TRT: 0:31:05 ?

Benjamin Hooks details his advancement in law, politics and business. From an appointment as the first black judge in Shelby County, Tennessee, to the first black commissioner on the FCC, Hooks credits Nixon and fellow Tennessean, U.S. Senator Howard Baker, for some of his success. Hooks also discusses some of the multitudinous changes he helped usher in radio and television during his tenure at the FCC. Hooks also details his involvement with the Masons and the impact on his political career.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Benjamin Hooks, Section A2003_168_001_004, TRT: 0:28:00 ?

Benjamin Hooks details his work with the NAACP, discussing many of the obstacles, tensions, and successes he experienced during his time there. Hooks explains how the NAACP positively affected the Civil Rights Movement and helped promote equality in the United States.