

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Roscoe C. Brown

---

## 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>	Brown, Roscoe Conkling, Jr., 1922-2016
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Roscoe C. Brown,
<b>Dates:</b>	September 16, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:39:05).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Academic administrator and tuskegee airman Roscoe C. Brown (1922 - 2016 ) was the Director of Urban Education Policy at CUNY. Brown was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 16, 2003, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_215
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Roscoe C. Brown, Jr., was born March 9, 1922, in Washington, D.C. Brown was the youngest of two children, his father working as a public health specialist and his mother as a teacher. After graduating from Springfield College in 1943, Brown joined the Air Force, where he served as one of the Tuskegee Airmen. During World War II, he served as a squadron commander and received the Distinguished Flying Cross. Returning after the war in 1946, Brown attended New York University, where he earned an M.A. in 1949 and a Ph.D. in 1951.

Before Brown earned his master's degree, he worked as a social investigator with the New York City Department of Welfare and as an instructor in physical education at West Virginia State College until 1948. While working on his doctorate in 1950, he became the director of the Institute of Afro-American Affairs and a professor of education at New York University, where he remained for the next twenty-seven years. In 1977, Brown was named president of Bronx Community College, a part of the City University of New York (CUNY), and continued there until 1993. Brown served as director of the Center for Urban Education Policy at the Graduate School and University Center of CUNY.

Brown was active with a number of organizations, including more than thirty years of service to the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. He was also active with the Jackie Robinson Foundation and Libraries for the Future, among many others. Brown was also a founding member of the American College of Sports Medicine.

Active in the media, as well, Brown hosted the television program, *African American Legends*, and he won the 1973 Emmy Award for Distinguished Program with his weekly series *Black Arts*. He published numerous articles and contributed to several books, and was the recipient of numerous awards, including the New York City Treasure Centennial Honor from the Museum of the City of New York and the Humanitarian Award from the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. Brown also completed nine New York City marathons. He had four children.

Brown passed away on July 2, 2016 at age 94.

---

# Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Roscoe C. Brown was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on September 16, 2003, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Academic administrator and tuskegee airman Roscoe C. Brown (1922 - 2016 ) was the Director of Urban Education Policy at CUNY.

---

# 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:

Brown, Roscoe Conkling, Jr., 1922-2016

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Brown, Roscoe Conkling, Jr., 1922-2016--Interviews

---

# Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

---

United States. Army Air Forces. Fighter Group, 332nd.

---

## Occupations:

Tuskegee Airman

---

## HistoryMakers® Category:

MilitaryMakers

---

## 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 Roscoe C. Brown, September 16, 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 Roscoe C. Brown, Section A2003\_215\_001\_001, TRT: 0:31:15 ?

Roscoe C. Brown was born on March 9, 1922 in Washington, D.C. His mother, Vivian Kemp Brown, was born in Richmond, Virginia where her father worked for the state government. She was raised in a middle-class African American community. Brown's father was born in Alexandria, Virginia and raised in

Washington, D.C., where he attended Dunbar High School and Howard University. Brown, Sr. was recruited to work in Franklin D. Roosevelt's Black Cabinet providing public health education through the National Negro Health Movement. Brown's mother volunteered at her church, but did not work outside the home after her children were born. Brown was raised in an integrated community in D.C., but attended segregated schools. His family was middle-class and he describes the class distinctions within D.C.'s black community. He had a very structured childhood; he was expected to do well in school and participate in sports. He attended Bruce K. Blanche elementary school and recalls stereotypical shows such as 'Amos 'n' Andy.'

Video Oral History Interview with Roscoe C. Brown, Section A2003\_215\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:35  
?

Roscoe C. Brown was raised in Washington, D.C., where his father was a member of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Black Cabinet. As a child, Brown spent summers at Camp Atwater, a summer camp in Massachusetts for the children of African American professionals; he was a member of the 12th Street YMCA and the Hi-Y Club; he attended Sunday school at St. Luke's Episcopal Church; and, he attended church services at Howard University's chapel where college president Mordecai Johnson preached. He also remembers driving to the South to visit extended family and historical sites. Brown attended Blanche K. Bruce Elementary School, Garnet-Patterson Junior High School and Dunbar High School where he made lasting friendships, excelled academically and participated in the JROTC. Brown attended Springfield College in Massachusetts, where he played football and lacrosse.

Video Oral History Interview with Roscoe C. Brown, Section A2003\_215\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:20  
?

Roscoe C. Brown's father was a member of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Black Cabinet. Brown remembers meeting several members of the Black Cabinet. Brown attended Springfield College in Massachusetts, where he had three majors: chemistry, health and physical education, and pre-medicine, and excelled at lacrosse. College was his first experience in an integrated educational environment. He describes the town of Springfield and how it has changed over the years. Brown attended a summer Civilian Military Training Program during college. He graduated from college in 1943 and joined the Tuskegee Airman where he was a fighter pilot. He explains the basis of the Airmen's reputation and remembers several missions he took part in during World War II, including the Berlin mission, during which he and others shot down several enemy jets in order to protect American pilots. After being discharged from the service Brown decided to continue his studies and eventually enrolled in a Ph.D. program at New York University.

Video Oral History Interview with Roscoe C. Brown, Section A2003\_215\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:05  
?

Roscoe C. Brown was unable to get a job as a commercial pilot when he returned from World War II due to racism; instead he accepted a job in public service before returning to school at Columbia University Teachers College in New York City. Insulted by the racism there, he left to teach at West Virginia State College. He later earned his Ph.D. from New York University (NYU) in 1951. At NYU, he was principal research associate on a sports medicine project. After earning his degree he taught at NYU, eventually becoming a faculty leader. He also hosted a CBS television program, 'Black Letters.' Following the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, Brown helped increase the enrollment of black students at NYU and developed an African

American history curriculum. Brown laments the decrease in African American faculty at NYU; talks about prominent African Americans in New York City during the 1940s and 1950s; and considers the source of his professional ambitions.

Video Oral History Interview with Roscoe C. Brown, Section A2003\_215\_001\_005, TRT: 0:27:40  
?

Roscoe C. Brown became the president of Bronx Community College in 1977 after many years at New York University. Community colleges in New York began to expand in the 1950s as four-year colleges reached their enrollment capacities and as students aimed for shorter technical degree programs. During his tenure as president, he reorganized the structure of the school, developed new programs and increased grant funding for the college. He was also very involved in politics and was a delegate to the 1984 Democratic National Convention when HistoryMaker Jesse L. Jackson was a presidential candidate. Brown is a prolific writer; he is proud of his work on the history of sports medicine, the Negro Almanac and the Black Culture Quiz. Brown talks about trends in higher education, the work that needs to be done to improve public education and coalition politics. He describes his hopes for the African American community and how he would like to be remembered. He reflects upon his success and his legacy.

Video Oral History Interview with Roscoe C. Brown, Section A2003\_215\_001\_006, TRT: 0:09:10  
?

Roscoe C. Brown narrates his photographs.