

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Theodore Newman, Jr.

---

## 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>	Newman, Theodore R., 1934-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Theodore Newman, Jr.,
<b>Dates:</b>	September 24, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:24:20).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Appellate court judge The Honorable Theodore Newman, Jr. (1934 - ) The Honorable Theodore Newman, Jr. has worked with the U.S. Department of Justice and in private practice. He later became an associate judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, and was appointed Chief Justice of the District's Court of Appeals. Newman was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 24, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_239
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Distinguished lawyer and judge Theodore R. Newman, Jr. was born on July 5, 1934, in Birmingham, Alabama. His family later moved to Mount Hermon, Massachusetts, where Newman graduated from high school.

After earning a philosophy degree from Brown University in 1955, Newman studied constitutional law and jurisprudence at Harvard Law School. He earned his law degree in 1958 and then began a three-year tour of duty with the U.S. Air Force as a judge advocate stationed in France. Upon his return to civilian life, Newman took a job with the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice. He entered private practice in 1962 in Washington, D.C.

In November 1970, Newman became an associate judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, the court of general trial jurisdiction for the district. He served in that capacity until his appointment in October 1976 as chief judge of the Court of Appeals. Newman joined the Board of Trustees at Brown University in 1979, and the following year, Brown University conferred an honorary doctorate of laws upon him. In 1984, he became an associate judge of the Court of Appeals, and held that position until 1991, when he retired and received status as a senior judge.

Newman has been very active over the years in several legal organizations. He is a fellow of the American Bar Foundation of the American Bar Association, a past president of the National Center for State Courts, and former chairman of the Judicial Council of the National Bar Association. The National Bar Association bestowed Newman with its highest honor, the C. Francis Stradford Award, for his outstanding service in the struggle for equal justice. In 1988, the board's Judicial Council gave him its highest honor, the William H. Hastie Award.

Newman has also lectured at Harvard Law School and held adjunct professorships at Howard University Law School and the Georgetown Law Center. He has traveled extensively in Africa.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Theodore Newman, Jr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on September 24, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Appellate court judge The Honorable Theodore Newman, Jr. (1934 - ) The Honorable Theodore Newman, Jr. has worked with the U.S. Department of Justice and in private practice. He later became an associate judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, and was appointed Chief Justice of the District's Court of Appeals.

---

## 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:

Newman, Theodore R., 1934-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Newman, Theodore R., 1934- --Interviews

---

## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

## Occupations:

Appellate Court Judge

---

## HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers

---

## 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 Theodore Newman, Jr., September 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 The Honorable Theodore Newman, Jr., Section A2003\_239\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

The Honorable Theodore Newman, Jr. was born on July 5, 1934 in Birmingham, Alabama. His paternal grandfather and great grandmother were enslaved during

the Civil War to Bob Newman of Henry County, Alabama. His father, Theodore Newman, graduated from Selma University in Selma, Alabama and Daniel Payne University in Birmingham, Alabama, and was an A.M.E. preacher and a civil rights activist. His mother, Rose McAlpine Newman was a school teacher who graduated from Selma University and obtained her master's degree from Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama. One of her ancestors, Dr. William McAlpine, was a founder of the National Baptist Convention. Newman describes the black community in Tuskegee, Alabama and the origins of the Veterans Administration Hospital. He also speaks to Tuskegee's value for education and his early expectations for attending an Ivy League college. Newman addresses stereotypes of being a preacher's son, his mischievous personality as a child, and his grade school years in Tuskegee.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Theodore Newman, Jr., Section A2003\_239\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

The Honorable Theodore Newman, Jr. describes his interactions with figures of the Tuskegee community in Alabama, including George Washington Carver, Portia Washington Pittman, W.P. Mitchell, and T.C. Williams. T.C. Williams encouraged him to attend Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Similarly, Newman describes his association with photographer P.H. Pope and Charles Gomillion. Newman's father built a home that was occupied by Tuskegee Airmen commander Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.; he was also a painter during the construction of Moton Field. In the late 1940s, as a student at Tuskegee Institute High School in Tuskegee, Newman made a failed attempt to begin a student council. He then applied to Mount Hermon School for Boys in Gill, Massachusetts and was admitted despite the efforts of his principal and test proctors to prevent his admission. He contrasts the academic rigor of Mount Hermon to Tuskegee Institute High School. After graduating in 1951, Newman pursued his childhood ambition: a legal career.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Theodore Newman, Jr., Section A2003\_239\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

The Honorable Theodore Newman, Jr. was admitted into five Ivy League institutions and decided to attend Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island where he pursued an A.B. degree in philosophy after briefly studying political science. He describes his mentors at Brown, including C.J. Ducasse, Elmer Blistein, and Roderick Chisholm. During his student days, there were few African American students at Brown, and Newman spent his weekends socializing in Boston, Massachusetts's Roxbury neighborhood with other black students from New England colleges. After graduating from Brown in 1955, Newman enrolled at Harvard Law School in Cambridge, Massachusetts with financial aid from the State of Alabama since he was barred from enrolling at the University of Alabama Law School in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. He recalls his experience at Harvard Law. After graduating in 1958, he fulfilled a three year commitment to the U.S. Air Force through ROTC in France as a judge advocate, and describes his experience with racism therein.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Theodore Newman, Jr., Section A2003\_239\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

The Honorable Theodore Newman, Jr. was stationed in France as a judge advocate for the U.S. Air Force during World War II. While in the military, Newman also frequented Haynes and Gabby's, a soul food restaurant in Paris, France where he met Hazel Scott. In 1961, he returned to the United States to join the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division where his application to join the voting rights staff was rejected by a white staff. He opines about

key civil rights figureheads in the Justice Department such as John Doar and Maceo Hubbard. Newman then entered private practice at the law firm of Houston, Bryant, and Gardner. He describes his lifelong affiliation with the Republican Party, and serving as vice chairman for the Washington D.C. Young Republicans in the 1960s and 1970s. Appointed to the Superior Court of the District of Columbia by President Richard Nixon in 1970, Newman tried civil and criminal cases before his appointment to the D.C. Court of Appeals by President Gerald Ford in 1976.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Theodore Newman, Jr., Section A2003\_239\_001\_005, TRT: 0:25:10 ?

The Honorable Theodore Newman, Jr. details his meeting with David Brody of the Anti-Defamation League after being accused of anti-Semitism. He denied the accusations in a court hearing, and was able to be nominated as Chief Justice for the D.C. Court of Appeals in 1976, although four colleagues attempted to prevent his acceptance. Newman stepped down from the position in 1984 and retired as an associate judge in 1991. He reflects upon his legacy, and his hopes and concerns for the African American community. He concludes the interview by describing what he would do differently and how he would like to be remembered.