

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Sterling Tucker

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Sterling, Tucker
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Sterling Tucker,
Dates:	August 2, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:41:46).
Abstract:	Nonprofit executive and city council member Sterling Tucker (1923 - 2019) is the president of Sterling Tucker Associates, a consulting firm, and has served as the head of the Washington, D.C. chapter of the National Urban League, city council member, and assistant secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Tucker was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 2, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_116
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Politician, activist and governmental appointee Sterling Tucker was born in Akron, Ohio on December 21, 1923. He attended the city's public schools, graduating from West High School in 1942. From there, he enrolled in the University of Akron, earning his A.B. in 1946 in sociology, and his M.A. in psychology in 1950.

Following the completion of his master's degree, Tucker moved to Washington, D.C., and in 1956, he became the head of the Washington chapter of the Urban League. He remained in that position until 1974, when he was elected to the Washington, D.C. City Council. While working for the Urban League, Tucker organized Solidarity Day, held on June 19, 1969, as a massive protest in the nation's capitol. The event, led by Reverend Ralph Abernathy and Coretta Scott King, was held during the Poor People's Campaign, and brought 50,000 demonstrators to the streets of Washington before the police disrupted the event. After four years of serving on the city council, Tucker made a run for the office of mayor, but lost to Marion Barry.

Following his defeat in the mayoral campaign, Tucker was named assistant secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and he remained there until 1981. That year, he opened Sterling Tucker Associates, a management consulting firm, where he continues to serve as president today. Tucker also spent the years of 1988 to 1990 as the drug czar of the Washington, D.C. government, where he worked to develop strategies for combating drug usage.

Tucker passed away on July 14, 2019.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Sterling Tucker was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 2, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Nonprofit executive and city council member Sterling Tucker (1923 - 2019) is the president of Sterling Tucker Associates, a consulting firm, and has served as the head of the Washington, D.C. chapter of the National Urban League, city council member, and assistant secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

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:

Sterling, Tucker

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Lane, Edgar Carey (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Sterling, Tucker--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

National Urban League.

Occupations:

City Council Member

Nonprofit Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers|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 Sterling Tucker, August 2, 2004. 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 Sterling Tucker, Section A2004_116_001_001, TRT: 0:30:56 ?
Sterling Tucker was born on December 21, 1923 in Akron, Ohio. Tucker's parents, Una Mae Vinson and John Clifford Tucker, born in Georgia in 1890 and 1895 respectively, met near Macon and had two children before moving to Akron where his father worked as a street cleaning foreman and his mother was

a homemaker. His parents had six more children including a son who died early in childhood. Tucker's family moved to Warner Street and lived there until Akron converted the block to public housing. They moved to Euclid Avenue where Tucker played sandlot baseball and scuffled with the local bully, though he had been punished by his parents for fights in the past. Tucker and his brothers spent summers with his paternal uncle in Detroit, Michigan. His maternal grandfather was highly literate and well-versed in the Bible, and his maternal grandmother was devout. Tucker taught Sunday school at Friendship Apostolic Church of Christ in Akron, though he never officially joined the Pentecostal church.

Video Oral History Interview with Sterling Tucker, Section A2004_116_001_002, TRT: 0:30:34 ?

Sterling Tucker attended Samuel A. Lane School from kindergarten through eighth grade and then West High School in Akron, Ohio. He enjoyed social sciences and was a school sports reporter. Although the schools were integrated, they did not employ any black teachers; Tucker and his future wife integrated the West High School student council. As a teenager, Tucker studied African American history, read and sold the Pittsburgh Courier and the Baltimore Afro and dreamed about changing the world. While president of the Akron Urban League youth council, Tucker advocated for an integrated YMCA in opposition to Akron Urban League director George Thompson. He helped organize lawsuits to uphold public accommodation laws and encouraged African Americans to envision the future boldly. Tucker recalls sharing a story about a beloved childhood teacher while speaking at a convention in Washington, D.C. and finding her later in the audience and describes the strong bond his extended family in Akron shares.

Video Oral History Interview with Sterling Tucker, Section A2004_116_001_003, TRT: 0:29:24 ?

Sterling Tucker graduated from West High School and matriculated at University of Akron in 1942. During college, he worked full-time as an office clerk at Firestone Tire and Rubber Company while studying sociology under Professor Harmon O. DeGraff and participating in student council. After being placed third when he should have won a university contest with a speech on the African American struggle, Tucker gave a sanitized speech to win first place the following year. Due to a draft board error, Tucker never served in World War II. After his college graduation in 1946, he joined the Urban League youth services staff. Tucker married Alloyce Robinson in 1948 and their first daughter was born two years later. That same year, Tucker earned a master's degree in psychology from the University of Akron. He returned to the Urban League as industrial secretary and fought employment discrimination in Akron. In this role, Tucker developed organizing strategies that he would implement during the Civil Rights Movement.

Video Oral History Interview with Sterling Tucker, Section A2004_116_001_004, TRT: 0:32:34 ?

Sterling Tucker worked for the Urban Leagues of Akron, Ohio and Canton, Ohio until he moved to Washington, D.C. to head its chapter of the Urban League in 1956. He left to develop the New Thrust program with the National Urban League. Concurrently, Tucker was working with Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., HistoryMaker Reverend Walter Fauntroy, and others to consolidate strategies for the Civil Rights Movement. The NUL focused on community development and policy implementation; Tucker worked to remove restrictive housing covenants which were still applied despite having been made illegal. Tucker was active in protests and was injured during a demonstration in Mississippi. He was vice chair of the March on Washington in 1963 and helped resolve conflicts between Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee,

Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and others. Tucker organized the NUL March to the Ballot Box leading up to the 1964 election between Barry Goldwater and incumbent President Lyndon Baines Johnson.

Video Oral History Interview with Sterling Tucker, Section A2004_116_001_005, TRT: 0:31:12 ?

Sterling Tucker helped establish the Peace Corps in 1963. After the March on Washington in 1963, Robert F. Kennedy advised Tucker and other Civil Rights leaders on how to persuade the U.S. Congress pass the Civil Rights Act. In 1964, Tucker and Whitney Young advised President Lyndon Baines Johnson and G. Mennen “Soapy” Williams on the War on Poverty programs. Tucker worked on the Minority Business Development Agency under President Richard Milhous Nixon. Tucker was active in the Washington, D.C. home rule movement and was appointed to the Council of the District of Columbia in 1974 by Richard Nixon. Tucker reflects on the changing status of American race relations as he recounts stories from presidential administrations in the second half of twentieth century. He also recalls Nixon renegeing on his plan to make Whitney Young his special assistant out of fear that Whitney Young’s integrity would cause him to resign and retrieving Whitney Young’s body from Nigeria after he drowned in 1971.

Video Oral History Interview with Sterling Tucker, Section A2004_116_001_006, TRT: 0:29:33 ?

Sterling Tucker was elected to the Washington, D.C. City Council in 1974. After losing the 1978 Washington D.C. mayoral election to HistoryMaker Marion Barry by half a percentage point, Tucker was appointed assistant secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development by President Jimmy Carter. Tucker remained at HUD until Ronald Reagan’s election. He then founded his management consultancy firm, Sterling Tucker Associates. He consulted for IBM to advise them on alternative means of addressing apartheid rather than divesting from South Africa, and for Coca-Cola on public policy. He worked to strengthen the non-profit organization Indiana Black Expo. Tucker served on the board of the American Diabetes Association and International Diabetes Federation, and founded the Diabetes Epidemic Action Council to influence public policy. At the time of the interview, Tucker had three grandchildren and his wife had recently passed away. Tucker describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Sterling Tucker, Section A2004_116_001_007, TRT: 0:31:15 ?

Sterling Tucker chose to place his children in private schools in order to ensure that they were learning effectively, a choice that garnered criticism in the press during his time as a Washington, D.C. elected public official. He was appointed by President George Herbert Walker Bush to serve as drug czar of Washington D.C. during the late 1980s. This appointment coincided with The Honorable Marion Barry’s drug arrest while mayor of D.C. Tucker reflects on his life and his parents’ thoughts on his success. He talks about his legacy and how he would like to be remembered. Tucker also narrates his photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Sterling Tucker, Section A2004_116_001_008, TRT: 0:06:18 ?

Sterling Tucker narrates his photographs.