

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Marion Curtis Bascom

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Bascom, Marion Curtis, 1925-2012
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Marion Curtis Bascom,
Dates:	January 11, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:14:43).
Abstract:	Civic leader and pastor Reverend Marion Curtis Bascom (1925 - 2012) served over four decades as a reverend at Douglas Memorial Community Church in Baltimore, Maryland. He created “Camp Farthest Out,” an overnight summer camp for underprivileged children, and was appointed as Baltimore’s first African American Fire Commissioner. Reverend Marion Bascom passed away on May 17, 2012. Bascom was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 11, 2005, in Baltimore, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_008
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Reverend Marion Curtis Bascom was born on March 14, 1925 in Pensacola, Florida. His mother was a domestic and later a chef. After the death of his father during his early childhood, Bascom was raised by his maternal grandmother. He earned his high school diploma in 1942 from Washington High School where he was active in the chorus, drama club and a member of the tennis team. That same year Bascom was called to the ministry and preached his trial sermon at Mount Olive Baptist Church in Pensacola.

In 1946, Bascom earned his B.S. degree in English from Florida Memorial College. He also served as pastor of Shiloh Baptist and First Baptist Church, both in Pensacola. In 1948, he earned his bachelor’s of divinity degree from Howard University. The following year, Bascom began his 46-year tenure at Douglas Memorial Community Church in Baltimore, Maryland.

While at Douglas, Bascom demonstrated his strong leadership skills in the pulpit as well as the community. In 1962, he created “Camp Farthest Out,” an overnight summer camp for underprivileged children. In 1963, Bascom participated in the Gwen Oak Park Demonstration, a protest that led to the desegregation of Baltimore’s amusement parks. Bascom was appointed Baltimore’s first African American Fire Commissioner in 1968, and under his leadership and direction calm was restored to the city after the disturbances following Martin Luther King’s assassination. In 1970, he received an honorary doctorate of divinity from his alma mater, Florida Memorial College.

Bascom also founded the Association of Black Charities, an umbrella organization of the United Way. Bascom’s commitment to the community included the development of Douglas Village, a 49-unit apartment complex, The

Douglas Memorial Federal Credit Union and a “Meals-on-Wheels” program for the sick and elderly.

After his retirement from Douglas Memorial in 1995, Bascom served as the interim Director of Morgan University’s Christian Center. He received numerous awards for his civic and community leadership. He was a member of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, the National Council of Community Churches and the Baltimore Hospitals Commission Board.

Bascom passed away on May 17, 2012 at age 87.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reverend Marion Curtis Bascom was conducted by Racine Tucker Hamilton on January 11, 2005, in Baltimore, Maryland, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civic leader and pastor Reverend Marion Curtis Bascom (1925 - 2012) served over four decades as a reverend at Douglas Memorial Community Church in Baltimore, Maryland. He created “Camp Farthest Out,” an overnight summer camp for underprivileged children, and was appointed as Baltimore’s first African American Fire Commissioner. Reverend Marion Bascom passed away on May 17, 2012.

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:

Bascom, Marion Curtis, 1925-2012

Hamilton, Racine Tucker (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Bascom, Marion Curtis, 1925-2012--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Pastor

HistoryMakers® Category:

ReligionMakers

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 Marion Curtis Bascom, January 11, 2005. 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 Marion Curtis Bascom, Section A2005_008_001_001, TRT: 0:30:56 ?

Reverend Marion Curtis Bascom was born on March 14, 1925 in Pensacola, Florida. His mother, Mary Anderson Knutt, was born in 1906, also in Pensacola. She was a domestic worker most of her life, but eventually became a professional cook. She moved to Chicago, Illinois when Bascom was young. His father, Brucell Bascom, was born in Pensacola. His mother was born shortly after emancipation to a white plantation overseer. Her grandmother was reputed to be a midwife and possibly delivered Bascom. She rented houses and loaned money at a high interest rate. Bascom's father was spoiled by his mother and attended college, but did not graduate. He died from tuberculosis when Bascom was seven years old. Bascom grew up in Pensacola, after living with his mother for a short while in Chicago. His maternal grandmother's rearing required regular attendance at church and inspired his interest in ministry. As a child, Bascom preached at funerals for cats and dogs and attended Spencer Bibbs Elementary School in Pensacola.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Marion Curtis Bascom, Section A2005_008_001_002, TRT: 0:31:14 ?

Reverend Marion Curtis Bascom grew up in Pensacola, Florida where he attended Spencer Bibbs Elementary School, listened to Ella Fitzgerald and often smelled the stench of a nearby paper factory. As a young child, he wanted to be a preacher and spent time listening to music at Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church. Bascom was raised mainly by his strict maternal grandmother, and he often felt lonely as an only child. At Washington High School, he was deeply influenced by principal Vernon T. McDaniel. Bascom preached his first sermon as a teenager. After graduating in 1942, he matriculated at Florida Memorial College in St. Augustine, Florida. While in college, Bascom pastored Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church. After obtaining his degree in English in 1946, he pastored First Baptist Church for a year before entering Howard University School of Divinity, where he completed his bachelor's of divinity. He became pastor of the non-denominational Douglas Memorial Community Church in Baltimore, Maryland in 1949.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Marion Curtis Bascom, Section A2005_008_001_003, TRT: 0:30:04 ?

Reverend Marion Curtis Bascom began pastoring Douglas Memorial Community Church in Baltimore, Maryland in 1949. The church's lack of denominational affiliation appealed to him, as did its excellent musical program. During the 1950s and 1960s, Bascom became involved in the Civil Rights Movement. He was acquainted with Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and several prominent leaders in the Baltimore community, including Lillie May Carroll Jackson and HistoryMaker The Honorable Parren J. Mitchell, III. In 1962, Bascom's church founded Camp Farthest Out in Sykesville, Maryland for underprivileged children in Baltimore. In 1968, Bascom was appointed the city's first African American fire commissioner. He met with Police Commissioner George M. Gelston in an effort to lead the city back to peace after the riots following King's assassination. Bascom also took part in the meeting with Governor Spiro Agnew during which several of Baltimore's African American leaders walked out after Agnew's tirade.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Marion Curtis Bascom, Section A2005_008_001_004, TRT: 0:31:00 ?

Reverend Marion Curtis Bascom, in his role as pastor of Douglas Memorial Community Church in Baltimore, Maryland, established Douglas Memorial Federal Credit Union Inc., invited Stokely Carmichael to speak when few other churches would, and helped found Douglas Village, an apartment complex created from abandoned houses. In the 1980s, he participated in creating Associated Black Charities, a counterpart to United Way that focuses on funding black organizations and charities. Adhering to a clause he helped establish in the church's constitution, Bascom retired as pastor at the age of seventy. At the time of the interview, Bascom's concerns for the African American church included the proliferation of mega churches, a disinclination to pool resources and waning social activism. He shares his vision of the black church and his hopes and concerns for the African American community; he reflects upon his life, legacy and how he hopes to be remembered. Bascom gives advice to those wishing to become clergy.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Marion Curtis Bascom, Section A2005_008_001_005, TRT: 0:11:29 ?

Reverend Marion Curtis Bascom narrates his photographs.