

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Stanley Tolliver, Sr.

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Tolliver, Stanley, Sr., 1925-2011
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Stanley Tolliver, Sr.,
Dates:	June 16, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	9 Betacame SP videocassettes (4:19:20).
Abstract:	Civil rights lawyer and radio host Stanley Tolliver, Sr. (1925 - 2011) served as legal counsel for the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the Congress of Racial Equality. He was also the only African American attorney involved in the defense of the students charged in the Kent State University anti-Vietnam War protest. Tolliver was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 16, 2005, in Cleveland, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_138
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Attorney, community activist, and media personality, Stanley Eugene Tolliver, Sr., was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on October 29, 1925, the only child of Eugene and Edna Tolliver. Tolliver graduated from East Technical High School in 1944, and earned his bachelor's degree from Baldwin-Wallace College in 1948. Tolliver completed his legal education at Cleveland Marshall School of Law, earning his LLB degree in 1951, his LLD degree in 1968, and his J.D. degree in 1969. After completing his LLB degree, Tolliver served in the U. S. Army Counterintelligence Corps from 1951 through 1953, and then passed the bar exam while in the army in 1953. Tolliver was admitted to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1977. Tolliver served as legal counsel for the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC); and the Congress of Racial Equality; he was also the only African American attorney involved in the defense of the students charged in the Kent State University anti-Vietnam War protest in the 1970s.

Tolliver joined other Ohioans in leading the call for the desegregation of the Cleveland Public Schools. After the state and local boards of education were found guilty of operating a segregated school system in Cleveland, the presiding jurist in the case, Federal Judge Frank J. Battisti, appointed Tolliver to committees on office and school monitoring, and community relations in 1978. Tolliver was first elected to membership on the Cleveland Board of Education in 1981; his twelve years of service on the board included two terms as board president.

Tolliver was the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including the Outstanding Alumnus Award from Baldwin-Wallace College in 1978, and the NAACP (Cleveland Chapter) Freedom Award in 2000. An avid runner since high school, Tolliver was inducted into the East Technical High School's Athletic Hall of Fame in 1978. Tolliver was also a life member of the NAACP, and the host of a popular weekly radio show, Conversations with Stanley E. Tolliver, Sr.

Tolliver was married to the late Dorothy Olivia Greenwood Tolliver for fifty years; the couple raised three children: Stephanie, Sherrie, and Stanley, Jr. Tolliver passed away on January 3, 2010.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Stanley Tolliver, Sr. was conducted by Regennia Williams on June 16, 2005, in Cleveland, Ohio, and was recorded on 9 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civil rights lawyer and radio host Stanley Tolliver, Sr. (1925 - 2011) served as legal counsel for the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the Congress of Racial Equality. He was also the only African American attorney involved in the defense of the students charged in the Kent State University anti-Vietnam War protest.

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:

Tolliver, Stanley, Sr., 1925-2011

Williams, Regennia (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Tolliver, Stanley, Sr., 1925-2011--Interviews

African American civil rights workers--Interviews

African American lawyers--Interviews

African American civic leaders--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Civil Rights Lawyer

Radio Host

HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers|MediaMakers

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 Stanley Tolliver, Sr., June 16, 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 Stanley Tolliver, Sr., Section A2005_138_001_001, TRT: 0:29:32 ?

Stanley Tolliver, Sr. was born on October 29, 1925 in Cleveland, Ohio to Edna Riles Tolliver and Eugene Tolliver. Tolliver's paternal ancestors were former slaves from Hazlehurst, Mississippi. The family name was originally Taliaferro, but it was changed to Tolliver by white plantation owners. Tolliver's father was born in Hazlehurst and served in World War I with his cousin, Lafayette Tolliver, who founded the Tolliver Temple Church of God in Christ in Seattle, Washington. Tolliver's mother was born on October 8, 1900 in Franklin, Louisiana to Henrietta Davis, a nurse. Tolliver's parents married after his father's return from World War I, and the two moved to Cleveland, Ohio where Tolliver was born. Tolliver recalls how his father introduced him to African American history at a young age, and his mother's love for music and religion and how she completed high school at the age of sixty-two. Tolliver remembers the smell of watermelon, his mother's cooking and his favorite foods while growing up.

African American civil rights workers--Interviews.

African American lawyers--Interviews.

African American civic leaders--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Stanley Tolliver, Sr., Section A2005_138_001_002, TRT: 0:29:49 ?

Stanley Tolliver, Sr. describes his and his father's favorite blues artists. Tolliver remembers singing 'Wings Over Jordan' with his church choir. He attended the Quincy School in Cleveland, Ohio, where he learned spirituals from his music teacher, Mrs. Fooster, and ran track under Coach Green. Tolliver excelled in his music classes at Rawlings Junior High School and was asked to perform at The Music Settlement in Cleveland. He boxed in his childhood and enjoyed watching Joe Louis and Jack Johnson in matches at the local theaters. Tolliver remembers an event where Paul Robeson sang and Mary McLeod Bethune delivered a lecture about education during his youth in Cleveland. Tolliver attended Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio where he was an athlete, an opera singer and the president of his fraternity. He remembers his father's pride in his accomplishments. Tolliver also recalls his newspaper publications on African American history, the Scrupy-Dump Cinema in Cleveland and dating Dinah Washington.

Video Oral History Interview with Stanley Tolliver, Sr., Section A2005_138_001_003, TRT: 0:29:43 ?

Stanley Tolliver, Sr. recalls the discrimination he faced while working in construction. He attended Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, Ohio where he studied drama under Dana Burns, founded the Sigma Sigma Epsilon Fraternity with HistoryMakers George Forbes and Steven A. Minter and ran track with Olympian athlete Harrison Dillard. Tolliver met his wife, Dorothy Greenwood Tolliver, as well as HistoryMaker Robert Guillaume and Russell and Rowena Jelliffe while performing at Karamu House in Cleveland, Ohio. When Tolliver injured his leg, he lost his running scholarship, but Professor Albert Riemenschneider helped Tolliver find financial support to complete his studies.

Tolliver graduated in 1948 and attended Cleveland-Marshall College of Law. He was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1951 and passed his bar exam while in the military. While stationed at Fort Breckinridge in Morganfield, Kentucky, Tolliver married his wife. Tolliver and his wife have two daughters and one son.

Video Oral History Interview with Stanley Tolliver, Sr., Section A2005_138_001_004, TRT: 0:30:09 ?

Stanley Tolliver, Sr. served in the U.S. Army just after its desegregation. Tolliver reflects upon the opportunities available to African American servicemen after integration, and discrimination within the Army, both during the time of his service and at the time of the interview. He remembers meeting General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. Before Tolliver was discharged, he began representing soldiers who were court-martialed, including two white soldiers, and won all three cases he tried. As the lawyer for the Congress of Racial Equality, Tolliver supported Carl Stokes' election as mayor of Cleveland, Ohio. Tolliver opened his first law office in Cleveland's Gold Coast neighborhood with the help of his wife, Dorothy Greenwood Tolliver. At the time of the interview, he occupied an office built by HistoryMaker Robert P. Madison. He recounts some of his early civil rights and police brutality cases, and a meeting with Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Fred Ahmed Evans.

Video Oral History Interview with Stanley Tolliver, Sr., Section A2005_138_001_005, TRT: 0:29:58 ?

Stanley Tolliver, Sr. introduced Fred Ahmed Evans to Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and defended Evans in an assault case in 1967. In 1968, Evans and other black nationalists shot at policemen in what came to be known as the Glenville shootout. Three policemen were killed and fifteen were wounded. Tolliver and Charles Fleming represented Evans at trial. Tolliver describes the racial discrimination within the Cleveland police department at that time and the repercussions he faced for representing Evans. His wife, Dorothy Greenwood Tolliver, was almost shot by police officers who descended upon Tolliver's home. Evans was found guilty and sentenced to death. Tolliver, along with Anna Aldridge, appealed Evans' case and were able to have him removed from death row. Tolliver describes the economic difficulties he faced as a civil rights lawyer specializing in affirmative action cases. Tolliver served for twelve years on Cleveland's Board of Education.

Video Oral History Interview with Stanley Tolliver, Sr., Section A2005_138_001_006, TRT: 0:29:27 ?

Stanley Tolliver, Sr. served on the Board of Education, Cleveland Metropolitan School District from 1981 to 1993. He remembers his campaign for president and the election of several African American superintendents, such as Frederick Holliday, to the board. During Tolliver's time as the board of education's president, the NAACP filed a lawsuit to end the segregation of Cleveland's schools, and Superintendent Paul W. Briggs decided to desegregate by busing. Tolliver describes the politics surrounding school desegregation and his efforts to have the state of Ohio pay for half of cost of busing. Tolliver reflects upon the benefits of busing for students, the jobs it created for African Americans and the end of busing in 1996. He describes his accomplishments as president of Cleveland's board of education, his relationship with HistoryMaker George Forbes and the state of Cleveland schools at the time of the interview.

Video Oral History Interview with Stanley Tolliver, Sr., Section A2005_138_001_007, TRT: 0:29:44 ?

Stanley Tolliver, Sr. talks about the issue of school funding in Cleveland, Ohio. He reflects upon how the corruption of Cleveland's police department and local

government impacts Cleveland public schools. Tolliver stresses the importance of educating young adults. In reflecting upon the fiftieth anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* ruling, Tolliver shares his concerns about educators no longer relating to their students or belonging to their students' communities. Tolliver also explains how increased career opportunities for women resulted in a lack of qualified teachers. He describes the limited job opportunities for African Americans within Cleveland neighborhoods and his hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Stanley Tolliver, Sr., Section A2005_138_001_008, TRT: 0:29:53 ?

Stanley Tolliver, Sr. traveled to Newton, Mississippi to represent an African American man accused of attempted murder after a white sheriff threatened him. Tolliver describes the townspeople's reactions to him and how he was able to have the case against his client dismissed. Visiting the Parmadale Children's Village of St. Vincent de Paul in Parma, Ohio gave Tolliver insight into the challenges facing young African Americans in the foster care system. He advocates for helping such children and young African Americans in general. He also explains the importance of being a role model, the need for reparations for African Americans, and threats to voting rights. Tolliver concludes the tape by narrating his photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Stanley Tolliver, Sr., Section A2005_138_001_009, TRT: 0:21:05 ?

Stanley Tolliver, Sr. narrates his photographs.