

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Charles Yancey

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## 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>	Yancey, Charles, 1948-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Charles Yancey,
<b>Dates:</b>	April 6, 2006 and February 7, 2006
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2006
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:44:07).
<b>Abstract:</b>	City government official and civic leader The Honorable Charles Yancey (1948 - ) was first elected to the Boston City Council in 1983, and is the longest serving elected public official in the history of Boston politics. He served as president of the Boston City Council in 2001 and the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials in 1999. Yancey was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 6, 2006 and February 7, 2006, in Boston, Massachusetts and Dorchester, Massachusetts. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2006_012
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Boston city councilman Charles Calvin Yancey was born on December 28, 1948, the sixth of nine children of Howell Yancey, Sr. and Alice W. Yancey. He grew up in Boston's Roxbury neighborhood where, at the age of twelve, he wrote a letter to the Mayor of Boston requesting that a vacant lot across the street from his home be turned into a playground. The playground became Yancey's first political success. Yancey graduated from Boston Technical High School in 1965. Yancey received his B.S. degree in economics from Tufts University in 1970 and his M.A. degree in public administration from Harvard University in 1991. Attending Tufts during the height of the Civil Rights Movement, Yancey founded the Afro-American Society and the African American Cultural Center at Tufts.

In the 1970s, Yancey co-founded the Community for Human Rights. Before his election to the Boston City Council, Yancey worked with the Urban Finance Division of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston and the UDI Community Development Corporation in Durham, North Carolina.

Yancey, a lifelong resident of Boston, Massachusetts, was first elected to the Boston City Council in 1983. He is the longest serving elected public official in the history of Boston politics. He served as president of the Boston City Council in 2001 and the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials in 1999.

Yancey also served as Chair of the Council's Committee of Employment and Workforce Development and Finance Services and Community Investment.

Yancey championed equal employment opportunity for "people of color" in the city government. The annual Charles C. Yancey Book Fair has provided over 100,000 free books for Boston children since its beginning in February 1987. Yancey gained national and international attention in 1984 for his involvement in the Free South

Africa Movement. He also established a Sister City relationship between Boston and Sekondi-Takoradi in Ghana, West Africa.

Yancey and his wife Marzetta (married in 1970) are the parents of three sons, Charles, Jr. (born in 1970); Derrick (born in 1972); Sharif (born in 1977); and a daughter Ashley (born in 1987).

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Charles Yancey was conducted by Robert Hayden on April 6, 2006 and February 7, 2006, in Boston, Massachusetts and Dorchester, Massachusetts, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. City government official and civic leader The Honorable Charles Yancey (1948 - ) was first elected to the Boston City Council in 1983, and is the longest serving elected public official in the history of Boston politics. He served as president of the Boston City Council in 2001 and the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials in 1999.

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## 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Yancey, Charles, 1948-

Hayden, Robert (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Yancey, Charles, 1948- --Interviews

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African American civic leaders--Massachusetts--Boston--Interviews

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African American labor leaders--Massachusetts--Boston--Interviews

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City council members--Massachusetts--Boston--Interviews

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## **Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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Boston (Mass.). City Council.

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## **Occupations:**

City Government Official

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Civic Leader

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

CivicMakers

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## **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 Charles Yancey, April 6, 2006 and February 7, 2006. 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Charles Yancey, Section A2006\_012\_001\_001, TRT: 0:31:08 ?

The Honorable Charles Yancey was born on December 28, 1948 in Boston, Massachusetts to Alice W. Yancey and Howell Yancey, Sr. His mother's family lived in the Boston area, where her grandfather, James Wolfe, attended Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts and his children attended Boston Public Schools. During Yancey's childhood, his mother worked as a nurse in addition to actively participating in civic organizations, including the Action for Boston Community Development, and lobbying the Boston School Committee for equal education. Yancey's father worked multiple jobs to support the family including positions at the post office and in a construction company. He was a World War II veteran and a union organizer in Boston during the 1930s and 1940s. Yancey's father's family emigrated from the Bahamas to Boston, Massachusetts in the nineteenth century. Yancey's earliest childhood memories include a house fire and playing with his eight siblings at the family home in Boston's Roxbury neighborhood.

African American civic leaders--Massachusetts--Boston--Interviews.

African American labor leaders--Massachusetts--Boston--Interviews.

City council members--Massachusetts--Boston--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Charles Yancey, Section A2006\_012\_001\_002, TRT: 0:31:09 ?

The Honorable Charles Yancey describes his childhood in Boston, Massachusetts' Roxbury neighborhood. Initially diverse, the neighborhood shifted demographically during the 1960s as African Americans continued to migrate from the South. In Boston, Yancey attended Phillips Brooks Elementary School and Patrick T. Campbell Junior High School. While in high school at Boston Technical High School, he experienced the educational battles of the 1960s when Louise Day Hicks, president of the Boston School Committee, fought against the integration of Boston Public Schools. Yancey did not participate in the school boycotts as a high schooler although he recalls his experience at Boston Technical High School as one of alienation. In 1964, Yancey met Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. After graduating high school in 1966, he began classes at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts. Yancey recalls the promise and turmoil of the mid-1960s evidenced by civil rights legislation and the urban riots.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Charles Yancey, Section A2006\_012\_001\_003, TRT: 0:12:07 ?

The Honorable Charles Yancey describes how residents in Boston, Massachusetts reacted to the news of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination in 1968. In addition to campus rallies, he witnessed the destruction

of businesses in his childhood neighborhood of Roxbury, Boston. Yancey details how his disillusionment with American society led him to become involved in campus organizing at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts where he was one of about twenty black students. In 1967, he formed the Afro-American Society with Charles N. Jordan, Jr. and other fellow students. The Society led a campus protest in November 1969, partnering with Boston community organizers like HistoryMaker Mel King and Leo Fletcher, and progressive white student organizations to achieve their goal of equal opportunity employment and recruitment at Tufts University. Yancey graduated from Tufts University with his B.S. degree in economics in 1970.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Charles Yancey, Section A2006\_012\_002\_004, TRT: 0:30:20 ?

The Honorable Charles Yancey describes his role in the founding of the Tufts Summer Institute, a program that brought lower income students to Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts. Yancey describes his contributions as an undergraduate student organizer at Tufts University. After graduating in 1970, Yancey returned to his childhood community on the outskirts of Boston where he cofounded the Community for Human Rights and directed the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity. He also worked at various financial organizations in Boston throughout the 1970s including the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. After a failed first attempt for elected office in 1976, Yancey worked at UDI Community Development Corporation in Durham, North Carolina. He soon returned to Boston where he held multiple political appointments during the latter 1970s and early 1980s. Yancey won a seat on the Boston City Council in 1984, and during his early years as a councilor, he sought to diversify city offices.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Charles Yancey, Section A2006\_012\_002\_005, TRT: 0:29:22 ?

The Honorable Charles Yancey describes his primary concerns for municipal legislation. After winning a seat to the Boston City Council in 1984, he initially focused on correcting the divestment of lower income neighborhoods and regulating public smoking. Boston public education and public safety also remained key interests throughout the 1980s. Yancey also talks about the killing of James Bowden by Boston police officers in 1975. Yancey sought to address racial discrimination in the Boston police department and to correct uneven distribution of police around the city. While serving on the city council in the 1990s, he held leadership positions on various committees. After Yancey succeeded James Kelly as Boston City Council president in 2001 during Thomas Menino's mayoral tenure, he continued to foster relationships formed while serving as president of the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Charles Yancey, Section A2006\_012\_002\_006, TRT: 0:30:01 ?

The Honorable Charles Yancey describes how the ethnic composition of Boston, Massachusetts' District 4 has changed as large numbers of people have migrated from the Caribbean. In particular, many Haitians have settled in his district. As a city council member, Yancey dealt with the challenges to provide equitable housing, education, and social services to these waves of immigrants to Boston. In 1987, Yancey began a book project with his family to collect book donations for community youth. Yancey attributes much of his character to his Boston upbringing. Reflecting upon his life, he recalls his parents' sacrifices and expresses a desire to teach. Yancey hopes that American society will continue to open more opportunities for the African American community and that he will

be remembered for having made a small impact on the world. He concludes by narrating photographs.