

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend H. K. Matthews

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Matthews, H. K. (Hawthorne Konrad), 1928-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend H. K. Matthews,
Dates:	October 16, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:22:15).
Abstract:	Civil rights leader and minister Reverend H. K. Matthews (1928 -) established the Pensacola NAACP Youth Council and Escambia County Chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Matthews was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 16, 2006, in Pensacola, Florida. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_121
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civil rights icon and minister Reverend H.K. Matthews was born Hawthorne Konrad Matthews on February 7, 1928, in Snow Hill, Alabama, to Lavinia Johnson and John Henry Matthews. Matthews was raised by his grandmother, Lucy P. Johnson-Matthews, after his mother died. His grandmother was a school teacher and his father was a farmer. He graduated from Snow Hill Institute in 1947, and attended Alabama Agricultural & Mechanical University for three years before enlisting in the United States military in 1949.

After serving in the Korean War, Matthews then moved to Pensacola, Florida in 1955, where he became involved with church activities and was mentored by one of Pensacola's leading black clergy, Reverend W.C. Dobbins. During this time, Matthews became active with civil rights activities and was employed by the Florida State Employment Service. He was ordained in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in 1961. While living in Florida, Matthews founded the Pensacola National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Youth Council and the Escambia County Chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Matthews spearheaded protests that resulted in the increased employment of African Americans at Pensacola's Sacred Heart Hospital, Southern Bell Telephone Company and the West Pensacola Bank. Matthews was jailed thirty-five times for his involvement with the Civil Rights Movement. Matthews returned to Alabama in 1977 and continued to minister at Zion Fountain A.M.E Zion church for twenty-four years. During this time, Matthews was also presiding over twenty-one other churches in the area.

Matthews has received many honors for his work in Pensacola, Florida during the Civil Rights Movement in Pensacola, Florida. In February 2006, the City Council of Pensacola dedicated a park in his honor to recognize the social changes that he brought to the city.

H.K. Matthews was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on October 16, 2006.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reverend H. K. Matthews was conducted by Robert Hayden on October 16, 2006, in Pensacola, Florida, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civil rights leader and minister Reverend H. K. Matthews (1928 -) established the Pensacola NAACP Youth Council and Escambia County Chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

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:

Matthews, H. K. (Hawthorne Konrad), 1928-

Hayden, Robert (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Matthews, H. K. (Hawthorne Konrad), 1928---Interviews

African American Ministers-Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Civic Leader

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 H. K. Matthews, October 16, 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).

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 H. K. Matthews, Section A2006_121_001_001, TRT: 0:31:15 ?

Reverend H.K. Matthews was born February 7, 1928 in Snow Hill, Alabama to John Matthews, Sr. and Luvenia Johnson Matthews. When he was a small child, his mother died, and his father, a farmer, moved away and remarried. From that time, he was raised in Snow Hill by his maternal grandmother, Lucy Purifoy

Johnson. His maternal grandfather, Thomas Johnson, was a saw mill worker who also died when Matthews was very young. Matthews' grandmother was a high school graduate, and a teacher at several rural schools near Snow Hill. She was responsible for Matthews' early education. Together, they sometimes walked over thirteen miles each way to school. Matthews recalls visiting the market with his grandmother as a child, and his confusion when white members of the community referred to his grandmother as auntie. From 1942, Matthews attended school at Snow Hill Normal and Industrial Institute, where he also preached sermons to fellow students from atop an apple crate. He attended Snow Hill's Brooks Chapel A.M.E. Church.

Southern States--Social life and customs.

Early childhood education.

Community development-Rural.

African Americans--Childhood and youth--Alabama.

African American families--Alabama.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend H. K. Matthews, Section A2006_121_001_002, TRT: 0:28:00 ?

Reverend H.K. Matthews graduated from high school in 1947, and attended Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical College, where he disliked the chaplain's overwrought sermons. In 1949, Matthews left school to join the U.S. Army. He trained at Massachusetts' Fort Devens, and was stationed in Korea until 1955. Matthews was discharged with a Purple Heart, and moved to Pensacola, Florida. There, he married his first wife, and became an alcoholic. He supported himself through odd jobs, until he was inspired to become sober for the sake of his son. Matthews then joined Reverend W.C. Dobbins in challenging segregation in Pensacola, and became a senior advisor to the local chapter of the NAACP Youth Council. He was also the first African American employee of Florida's state employment service agency, and later managed the Escambia Arms housing project. In 1961, Matthews was ordained as a deacon, and within four years, became an elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion church

African Americans--Military service.

African American universities and colleges.

African American clergy--Alabama--Interviews.

African American churches--Alabama.

Pensacola (Fla.).

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend H. K. Matthews, Section A2006_121_001_003, TRT: 0:31:00 ?

Reverend H.K. Matthews' maternal grandmother, teacher Lucy Purifoy Johnson, inspired him to join the Civil Rights Movement in Pensacola, Florida, and he became an advocate for students in the newly integrated public schools. At Escambia High School, he protested the school's use of the song 'Dixie'; forced the mascot to be changed from the Rebels; and instituted a black history assembly. However, Matthews was arrested after riots broke out at the school. Matthews also demonstrated at segregated businesses, where white passersby often burned demonstrators with cigarettes and acid. Matthews recalls founding the Pensacola chapter of the SCLC, where he organized boycotts while serving as its president. In 1974, Matthews' cousin, Wendel Blackwell, was murdered by a Pensacola police officer. Matthews held protests in response, and was arrested on spurious charges. He was sentenced to five years in prison, but was released after two months, when Florida Governor Reubin Askew commuted his sentence.

African Americans--Suffrage--Southern States.
Southern Christian Leadership Conference--Alabama.
African Americans--Crimes against--Alabama.
Civil rights movements--Alabama.
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.
Civil rights demonstrations.
Police brutality.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend H. K. Matthews, Section A2006_121_001_004, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Reverend H.K. Matthews drove from Pensacola, Florida to Selma, Alabama in 1965 to represent Florida's African American community on the Selma to Montgomery March. There, he joined Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Hosea Williams, Walter Reuther, John Lewis and Andrew Young. While crossing Selma's Edmund Pettus Bridge, the marchers were attacked. Matthews was struck with a club, and could not complete the march due to his injuries. In the late 1970s, Matthews was unable to find work in Pensacola, and moved to Brewton, Alabama. There, he took a position as a financial aid clerk at Jefferson Davis Junior College, and served as a minister at Zion Fountain A.M.E. Matthews received numerous honors for his dedication to civil rights, including the Paul Robeson Award and the Faithful Servant Award from SCLC. In 2006, a park in Pensacola was named in his honor. Matthews reads a passage from his book, 'Victory After the Fall,' and reflects upon his life.

African Americans--Civil rights movements--Alabama--Selma--History--20th century.

African American families.

Civil rights movements--Florida--Pensacola.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend H. K. Matthews, Section A2006_121_001_005, TRT: 0:22:10 ?

Rev. H.K. Matthews reflects on the Civil Rights Movement and discusses some family photographs.

Civil rights movements.