

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Herbert U. Fielding

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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>	Fielding, Herbert U., 1923-2015
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Herbert U. Fielding,
<b>Dates:</b>	February 2, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:35:54).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Politician Herbert U. Fielding (1923 - 2015 ) was the first black representative elected to the South Carolina legislature since Reconstruction. He later served as the chairperson of the South Carolina Legislative Black Caucus. Fielding was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 2, 2007, in Charleston, South Carolina. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_042
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Politician Herbert U. Fielding was born on July 6, 1923 in Charleston, South Carolina to Julius and Sadie Fielding. Fielding served in the United States Army during World War II prior to attending and receiving his B.S. degree from West Virginia State College in 1948.

In 1952, Fielding took charge of the day-to-day operations of the family funeral home business, becoming President and CEO of Fielding Home for Funeral Services. Founded in 1912 by Fielding's father, Fielding Home for Funeral Services was the largest African American-owned and operated funeral home in the state of South Carolina.

Fielding became involved in the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. He often paid for the bail of civil rights activists, picketers and demonstrators. Fielding encouraged African Americans to vote and mobilized them to memorize the constitution in order to gain voting rights.

In 1970, Fielding became the first African American to be elected a representative in South Carolina since Reconstruction. He served for three years, then returned to the South Carolina State House in 1983. In 1985, Fielding was elected to South Carolina's State Senate, where he served until 1992. In 1990, he became the chairperson of the South Carolina Legislative Black Caucus.

Fielding is a member of several organizations including the South Carolina Commission on Vocational Rehabilitation, the University of South Carolina Budget Board and the South Carolina Human Affairs Commission. He is also a vestry member at Calvary Episcopal Church in Charleston.

The Department of Transportation named Highway 61 from James Island Expressway to South Carolina Route 61 in Charleston County as the Herbert U. Fielding Connector.

Fielding was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 2, 2007.

Fielding passed away on August 10, 2015.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Herbert U. Fielding was conducted by Denise Gines on February 2, 2007, in Charleston, South Carolina, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Politician Herbert U. Fielding (1923 - 2015 ) was the first black representative elected to the South Carolina legislature since Reconstruction. He later served as the chairperson of the South Carolina Legislative Black Caucus.

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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:

Fielding, Herbert U., 1923-2015

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Fielding, Herbert U., 1923-2015 --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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## Occupations:

Politician

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

PoliticalMakers

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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 Herbert U. Fielding, February 2, 2007. 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 Herbert U. Fielding, Section A2007\_042\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Herbert U. Fielding was born on July 6, 1923 in Charleston, South Carolina to Sadie Gaillard Fielding and Julius P.L. Fielding. His mother's family were

wealthy landowners in Charleston. Fielding's maternal grandfather, Julius Gaillard, ran several butcher shops; and, in the 1910s, Booker T. Washington invited him to teach butchery classes at Tuskegee Institute. His father's family came from Summerville, South Carolina, where they went by the surname Phelon, and ran a store. Fielding's paternal grandfather, Julius R. Fielding, ran a livery stable in his home, and his paternal grandmother, Felicia Wright Goodwin, founded the YWCA branch in Charleston. After his paternal grandfather's death, his grandmother married a man named Goodwin, who ran a barbershop for whites. Fielding's father attended Renouard Training School for Embalmers to prepare for the funeral business. During the Great Depression, his parents jointly ran Fielding Home for Funeral Services, and his paternal grandmother helped with childrearing.

Video Oral History Interview with Herbert U. Fielding, Section A2007\_042\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:37 ?

Herbert U. Fielding was raised in Charleston, South Carolina, where his father, Julius P.L. Fielding, accepted barter payment at Fielding Home for Funeral Services during the Great Depression. His family members attended Centenary United Methodist Church and Calvary Episcopal Church. Fielding had five siblings, including two, Julius R. Fielding and Dorothy Fielding, who died in childhood accidents. Fielding attended the Avery Normal Institute until the ninth grade, when he transferred to Lincoln Academy, led by headmaster Henry Curtis McDowell in Kings Mountain, North Carolina. There, he played basketball, and sang in the glee club. Fielding graduated in 1940, and enrolled at West Virginia State College, where he joined the Reserve Officers' Training Corps. At the start of World War II, he passed the exam to qualify for the U.S. Army Air Corps, but was denied due to his race, and assigned to the service corps. Fielding was stationed at Camp Plauche in Louisiana, where he was a company clerk.

Video Oral History Interview with Herbert U. Fielding, Section A2007\_042\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:35 ?

Herbert U. Fielding was assigned to the 69th Infantry Division in Camp Shelby, Mississippi, but its general refused to admit black soldiers. He was reassigned to Camp Myles Standish in Massachusetts, and then to a quartermaster trucking company in France. After World War II, Fielding studied in Europe at Biarritz American University and the University of Glasgow; and, in 1946, returned to complete a B.S. degree at West Virginia State College. Then, Fielding moved back to Charleston to help run the Fielding Home for Funeral Services. He describes the local funeral customs, such as burying bodies with a live chicken and passing babies over the casket. Fielding also became active in civil rights efforts. He volunteered as auditor for the local NAACP branch, led by Arthur J. Clement, Jr.; and joined Esau Jenkins' voter registration drives. Additionally, Fielding recalls how his paternal grandmother, Felicia Wright Goodwin, founded a YWCA branch, and distributed donated clothing during the Great Depression.

Video Oral History Interview with Herbert U. Fielding, Section A2007\_042\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:54 ?

Herbert U. Fielding learned from his father's former coworkers, Charles Mason and Frederick Brown, at Fielding Home for Funeral Services in Charleston, South Carolina. Fielding was active in civil rights; and, in 1960, solicited the black business community, including Willis Johnson of Johnson Funeral Home, to donate bail for those arrested at sit-ins. Fielding belonged to several groups founded by Esau Jenkins, including the Citizens Committee of Charleston County, which organized voter registration drives. He also helped Septima

Poinsette Clark establish schools in the area. Fielding attended the March on Washington, and often saw Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. at conferences. On the night of Dr. King's assassination in 1968, he and J. Arthur Brown patrolled Charleston to defuse rioting. In 1970, Fielding was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives, along with James L. Felder and I.S. Leevy Johnson, and advocated to change the legislature from at-large to single-member districts.

Video Oral History Interview with Herbert U. Fielding, Section A2007\_042\_001\_005, TRT: 0:28:29 ?

Herbert U. Fielding was reelected to the South Carolina House of Representatives in 1972, along with three other African Americans: Ernest A. Finney, Jr., Robert R. Woods and Benjamin James Gordon, Jr. He advocated single-member districts, and was insulted for doing so by Speaker Solomon Blatt, Sr. In 1974, Fielding resigned from the legislature due to charges he had failed to file an income tax return. He returned in 1982; and, in 1985, won a seat in the South Carolina Senate. There, Fielding integrated multiple state boards, including the South Carolina Board of Barber Examiners and the South Carolina State Board of Funeral Service; and served as chair of the South Carolina Legislative Black Caucus. Fielding retired from politics in 1992. He returned to work at the Fielding Home for Funeral Services, and opened new locations in North Charleston and Yorges Island, South Carolina. He describes his longtime membership in Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, and reflects upon his life and marriage.

Video Oral History Interview with Herbert U. Fielding, Section A2007\_042\_001\_006, TRT: 0:10:59 ?

Herbert U. Fielding describes his hopes for future generations, and offers advice for those who are considering a career in government. He concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.