

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Craig Strong

---

## 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>	Strong, Craig, 1947-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Craig Strong,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 7, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:37:14).
<b>Abstract:</b>	State court judge The Honorable Craig Strong (1947 - ) served as State of Michigan, 3rd District Circuit Court Judge, judicial chair of the National Bar Association, was a member of the National Bar Association's delegation to South Africa, and a founding member of the Association of Black Judges of Michigan. Strong was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 7, 2007, in Detroit, Michigan. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_076
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

State of Michigan, 3rd District Circuit Court Judge Craig Stephen Strong was born on September 5, 1947, in Detroit, Michigan. Strong was raised in the Old Westside neighborhood of Detroit by his parents, Erman and Manila Geraldine Powers Strong. Growing up near the Blue Bird Bar and St. Cyprian Episcopal Church, Strong played the saxophone with the Junior Flips and was a patrol boy and a Boy Scout. Strong attended Sampson Elementary School and Cass Technical High School, where he excelled in the sciences. Graduating from high school in 1965, Strong entered Howard University, where he earned his B.S. degree in 1969. Drafted in 1971, Strong served as the only African American in the Navy's Judges Advocacy Corps at that time. In 1973, Strong received his J.D. degree from the Detroit College of Law.

While in law school, Strong worked for Wayne County Legal Services and later the Trade Union Leadership Council; during that time, he was influenced by legal activists Milton Henry, Damon J. Keith, Kenny Cockrell and Mike Walls. Passing the Michigan State Bar at age twenty-nine, Strong became an officer of the Wolverine Bar Association and eventually its youngest president at age twenty-nine. Active in Democratic politics, Strong was elected a judge of the Detroit Records Court at age thirty-one. Strong would later be elected to the 3rd District Michigan State Circuit Court in 2001. Strong was a founding member of the Association of Black Judges of Michigan and also served as its president. Strong served as judicial chair of the National Bar Association; was a member of the National Bar Association's delegation to South Africa; helped develop the International Black Bar Association; and served on the Supreme Court of South Africa.

In 1997, Strong, an avid collector of African art and African American memorabilia, was instrumental in the establishment of the Charles Wright African American History Museum in Detroit; he has been honored with the Outstanding Museum Service Award for his extensive fundraising efforts. Strong was a mason, a member of the NAACP and the Black United Fund of Michigan, in addition to being well known nationally for his celebrity

photographs, and his sartorial taste in clothing.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Craig Strong was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 7, 2007, in Detroit, Michigan, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. State court judge The Honorable Craig Strong (1947 - ) served as State of Michigan, 3rd District Circuit Court Judge, judicial chair of the National Bar Association, was a member of the National Bar Association's delegation to South Africa, and a founding member of the Association of Black Judges of Michigan.

---

## 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:

Strong, Craig, 1947-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Strong, Craig, 1947- --Interviews

---

African American judges--Interviews

---

## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

Michigan

---

## Occupations:

State Court Judge

---

## HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers

---

## 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 Craig Strong, March 7, 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).

---

## 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 The Honorable Craig Strong, Section A2007\_076\_001\_001,  
TRT: 0:28:39 ?

The Honorable Craig Strong was born on September 5, 1947 in Detroit, Michigan to Manila Geraldine Powers and Erman Strong. His mother was born in Greenwood, South Carolina in 1907. She moved from Greenwood, South Carolina to Detroit as a child after her father died. Strong's maternal grandfather had over 200 acres of land in South Carolina, which the family later lost. Strong's father was born in 1902 in Birmingham, Alabama and also moved to Detroit as a; he would later work as a red cap. Strong's paternal grandmother was born enslaved and some of his paternal ancestors passed for white. Both of his parents valued education. Strong describes growing up as the youngest of five children on Detroit's old west side, which was also home to HistoryMakers Damon Keith and John Conyers. He talks about the sights, sounds, and smells of his childhood as well as working as a paperboy. As safety patrol boy outside of Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church, he had the opportunity to meet Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

African American judges--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Craig Strong, Section A2007\_076\_001\_002,  
TRT: 0:28:23 ?

The Honorable Craig Strong describes his childhood in Detroit, Michigan. His father worked for the railroad as a red cap, and would take him to department stores to make sure he had a suit, tie, and Sunday shoes. Along with appearance, his father also emphasized courteousness and taught him to behave appropriately in public. Strong attended Sampson Elementary School in Detroit, where many of the teachers were his neighbors and older siblings' contemporaries. HistoryMaker John Conyers was also a graduate of Sampson. Strong then attended Detroit's Cass Technical High School, where he became interested in chemistry and biology. Before graduating in 1965, he visited the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, New York where he met Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Strong describes growing up in a political atmosphere, surrounded by figures like Paul Robeson, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Stokely Carmichael and Milton Henry. He reflects on changes in his neighborhood after drugs were introduced to the community.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Craig Strong, Section A2007\_076\_001\_003,  
TRT: 0:28:58 ?

The Honorable Craig Strong recalls religious figures from his childhood such as Sweet Daddy Grace and Father Divine, who were known for their flashy apparel. He describes learning to sweet-talk women respectfully with rap. Although most of his siblings attended the University of Michigan, Strong decided to enroll at Howard University in 1965. Strong describes his experience at Howard University where he pledged in the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity. He also participated in the protests preceding Howard President James Nabrit's resignation, and lunched with HistoryMaker and Howard President James Cheek. After obtaining his B.A. degree in social sciences in 1969, Strong returned to Detroit, Michigan and entered the Detroit College of Law. In 1970, he was drafted into the U.S. Army and placed on reserve shortly thereafter. Strong describes law school admirable lawyers, and his early career as a lawyer during which he volunteered for Wayne County Neighborhood Legal Services. He was appointed as a judge in 1978.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Craig Strong, Section A2007\_076\_001\_004,  
TRT: 0:28:41 ?

The Honorable Craig Strong reflects on cases he adjudicated over the course of

his career in Detroit, Michigan's criminal courts, noting the problems that drugs created in the African American community. He describes helping a young ex-convict transition post-incarceration through the organization Jackets for Jobs. He talks about his hopes for Detroit's future as well as the organizations he has been involved with. Strong is known for his extensive collection of African American memorabilia, including a cigar box and a photo of composer George Walker. Strong talks about the Association of Black Judges in Michigan, which was formed in response to the attack of black judges in Detroit's newspapers. He recalls how his court was merged with the Wayne County court, giving black judges a new status in Michigan's legal system. Strong describes the differences in between black judges and lawyers, and their white colleagues.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Craig Strong, Section A2007\_076\_001\_005, TRT: 0:28:39 ?

The Honorable Craig Strong talks about the Wolverine Bar Association, an association of African American lawyers and judges. The Wolverine Bar was instrumental to Strong's career, providing him with monetary support and mentorship. Strong also discusses the election process and the importance of name recognition in Detroit, Michigan. Over the course of his career, Strong met and made appearances with many public figures, which he attributes to his history of public service. He describes his friendship with James Brown, as well as serving as an international legal observer in the first post-apartheid elections in South Africa, where he met Winnie Mandela, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Rosa Parks. Strong describes his colorful hat collection and the significance of his judgeship in the U.S. Navy. He participated in the Million Man March in 1995. Strong reflects on his life, his legacy, and how he would like to be remembered as well as his hopes and concerns for the African American community. He has one son.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Craig Strong, Section A2007\_076\_001\_006, TRT: 0:13:54 ?

The Honorable Craig Strong narrates his photographs.