

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Andrew L. Jefferson, Jr.

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Jefferson, Andrew L., 1934-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Andrew L. Jefferson, Jr.,
Dates:	August 10, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:00:00).
Abstract:	Federal district court judge and trial lawyer The Honorable Andrew L. Jefferson, Jr. (1934 - 2008) served for the 208th District Court in Harris County, Texas, until 1975. He was also the the president of the Nu Boule' chapter of the Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity. In honor of his contributions to the legal profession, the Andrew L. Jefferson Endowment for Trial Advocacy was established at Texas Southern University's Thurgood Marshall School of Law in Houston, Texas. Jefferson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 10, 2007, in Houston, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_231
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Andrew Leon Thomas Jefferson, Jr. was born on August 19, 1934, in Dallas, Texas, to Bertha Jefferson and Andrew Jefferson, Sr. After Jefferson and his family moved to Houston, Texas, in 1936, he attended Jack Yates High School which he graduated from in 1952. Jefferson received his B.A. degree from Texas Southern University in 1956, and his J.D. degree from the University of Texas School of Law in 1959.

During his first year out of law school, 1960, Jefferson worked as a partner for Washington & Jefferson Attorneys at Law. In 1962, Jefferson worked as an assistant criminal district attorney for San Antonio County, and later in the year served as the chief assistant to the U.S. Attorney in the Western District of Texas.

In 1968, Jefferson was hired as a trial and labor relations counsel for Humble Oil & Refinery Company, which was renamed Exxon Corporation. From 1970 to 1973, Jefferson presided as a judge for the Harris County Family District Courts in conjunction with the Harris County Domestic Relations Office, before serving as a judge for the 208th District Court in Harris County until 1975.

In 1975, Jefferson worked in private practice with Jefferson, Sherman & Mims. During this time, Jefferson became the president of the Nu Boule' chapter of the Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, an association considered to be the first African American Greek letter organization. Between 1986 and 1987, Jefferson served on the Presidential Search Committee of Texas Southern University and the Merit Selection of Judges Committee. In 1996, Jefferson became a member of the International Society of Barristers, a society of outstanding trial lawyers chosen by their peers on the basis of excellence and integrity in advocacy.

In 2001, the Andrew L. Jefferson Endowment for Trial Advocacy was established at Texas Southern University's Thurgood Marshall School of Law in Houston, Texas. The endowment seeks to preserve the jury trial in order to consider issues of ethics and excellence in advocacy and the role of litigation in society. Jefferson was a member of numerous professional and civic organizations including the American Bar Association, the Houston Lawyers Association, the Houston Area Urban League and the NAACP.

Jefferson passed away on December 8, 2008 at the age of 74.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Andrew L. Jefferson, Jr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 10, 2007, in Houston, Texas, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Federal district court judge and trial lawyer The Honorable Andrew L. Jefferson, Jr. (1934 - 2008) served for the 208th District Court in Harris County, Texas, until 1975. He was also the the president of the Nu Boule' chapter of the Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity. In honor of his contributions to the legal profession, the Andrew L. Jefferson Endowment for Trial Advocacy was established at Texas Southern University's Thurgood Marshall School of Law in Houston, Texas.

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:

Jefferson, Andrew L., 1934-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Jefferson, Andrew L., 1934---Interviews

African American judges--Texas--Interviews

African American lawyers--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Harris County (Tex.)

Occupations:

Federal District Court Judge

Trial Lawyer

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 Andrew L. Jefferson, Jr., August 10, 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 Andrew L. Jefferson, Jr., Section A2007_231_001_001, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

The Honorable Andrew L. Jefferson, Jr. was born on August 19, 1934 in Dallas, Texas to Bertha Jefferson-Nathaniel and Andrew L. Jefferson, Sr. His mother studied typing at Mary Allen Seminary in Crockett, Texas, and his father was a carpenter. They married and raised five children in the Third Ward neighborhood of Houston, Texas, where their mail carrier was civil rights activist Heman Marion Sweatt. Jefferson was mentored by his pastor, John D. Moore, at Pilgrim Congregational United Church of Christ; and attended Frederick Douglass Elementary School. After his parents' divorce, Jefferson moved with his mother from Houston to Crockett. There, he became aware of discrimination when he was forced to sit in the rear balconies of movie theaters. He returned to Houston to attend Jack Yates High School, where he was president of the honor society, and was mentored by teacher Lullelia Walker Harrison. He was unable to afford college, but a member of his church sponsored his studies at Texas Southern University.

African American judges--Texas--Interviews.

African American lawyers--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Andrew L. Jefferson, Jr., Section A2007_231_001_002, TRT: 0:30:20 ?

The Honorable Andrew L. Jefferson, Jr. attended Texas Southern University in Houston, Texas from 1952 as a pre-law major, although he initially wanted to study architecture. He was inspired by Professor Henry Allen Bullock, and illustrated one of his sociology publications. Jefferson also joined Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, and worked as the business manager for The Tiger undergraduate yearbook. There, he met Barbara Jordan; and, despite beating her in their class presidential elections, became her close friend. To fund his education, Jefferson worked at the post office, and as a professional photographer. In 1956, he graduated, and enrolled at the University of Texas at Austin School of Law. He was one of five African American students in his class, and was forced to use segregated housing and a separate cafeteria. While at law school, Jefferson was influenced by constitutional law professor Charles Allen Wright and Dean W. Page Keeton. He earned his law degree, and passed the bar examination in 1959.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Andrew L. Jefferson, Jr., Section A2007_231_001_003, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

The Honorable Andrew L. Jefferson, Jr. opened Washington and Jefferson, Attorneys at Law with George Washington, Jr. in Houston, Texas in 1960. The firm represented the Freedom Riders and other civil rights cases. In 1961, Jefferson was appointed to serve as the first black assistant district attorney in San Antonio, Texas. While there, the court's chief judge prevented Jefferson

from prosecuting white defendants. Jefferson served until 1962, when he was appointed by Robert F. Kennedy as the first African American chief assistant U.S. Attorney in the Western District of Texas. In 1968, upon learning that President Lyndon Baines Johnson would not seek reelection, Jefferson accepted a legal position at Humble Oil and Refining Company, where he worked on litigation and labor law compliance. While Jefferson was welcomed at the company, he was refused service at the associated Petroleum Club restaurant. He contacted the employee relations department, and had the policy overturned.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Andrew L. Jefferson, Jr., Section A2007_231_001_004, TRT: 0:31:00 ?

The Honorable Andrew L. Jefferson, Jr., was recruited by his friend, Barbara Jordan, to become the first African American district judge of the Harris County Family District Court in Texas in 1970. On the bench, he encouraged local Black Panther Party leader Ovide Duncantell to stand up to police, and dismissed charges against Latino individuals, who were systematically excluded from Harris County's grand jury. In 1972, he was endorsed for reelection by The Houston Post, and defeated both of his white opponents. He received the National Torch of Liberty Award from the Anti-Defamation League in 1974 for his work fighting discrimination. In 1975, Jefferson returned to private practice, where he tried criminal, civil, state and federal cases. He also organized Roy Mark Hofheinz's campaign for mayoralty of Houston, Texas. Jefferson describes his involvement with the Nu Boule chapter of the Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, and reflects upon his life, legacy and how he would like to be remembered.