

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Louis Dodd

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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>	Dodd, Louis, 1944-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Louis Dodd,
<b>Dates:</b>	November 21, 2008
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2008
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:47:30).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Insurance executive Louis Dodd (1944 - ) was president and CEO of Dodd's Insurance Agency since 1971. A former teacher, Dodd was also co-owner in three Chicago hotels, and was the director of Highland Community Bank in Chicago from 1977 through 2003. Dodd was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 21, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2008_140
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Insurance executive Louis Price Dodd was born on February 15, 1944, in Winona, Mississippi, to Willie and Corene Dodd. Dodd graduated valedictorian from Chicago's Dunbar Vocational High School in 1959. He received his B.A. degree in education from Chicago State University in 1963 and has also taken advanced courses at Northeastern Illinois University.

Dodd worked as a Language Arts teacher for the Chicago Board of Education from 1966 to 1971 and was the Director of General Education for Chicago Youth Centers from 1969 to 1971. During this same time period, he was also the Co-Owner and Vice President of Marketing for Bailey's Stamp Works. Since 1971, Dodd has been in the insurance business as an independent agency affiliate of Allstate Insurance. Throughout this time, he has been president and CEO of Dodd's Insurance Agency. Dodd has received numerous awards for his work in the insurance industry and has been Allstate's leading sales agent for the Chicago Metro Region for over fifteen years. From 1977 through 2003, Dodd was the director of Highland Community Bank in Chicago. Building on his success in the insurance industry, Dodd entered the hotel business and is co-owner of three Chicago hotels, The Amber Inn, The Dew Central Motel, and the South Parkway Inn. He is also a partner in two other enterprises, the Rolls Royce Car Wash and Kermit Coleman Medical Center.

Dodd is married to fellow insurance agent Alma Dodd. They have three children: Robert Dodd, Kimberly Yelverton, and Courtney Dodd.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Louis Dodd was conducted by Sasha Dalton on November 21, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Insurance executive Louis Dodd (1944 - )

was president and CEO of Dodd's Insurance Agency since 1971. A former teacher, Dodd was also co-owner in three Chicago hotels, and was the director of Highland Community Bank in Chicago from 1977 through 2003.

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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:

Dodd, Louis, 1944-

Dalton, Sasha (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Dodd, Louis, 1944- --Interviews

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African American executives--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

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Insurance executives--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

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Bank directors--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

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African American teachers--Illinois--Chicago--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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Allstate Insurance Company

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# Occupations:

Insurance Executive

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# HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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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 Louis Dodd, November 21, 2008. 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 Louis Dodd, Section A2008\_140\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Louis Dodd was born on February 15, 1944 in Winona, Mississippi to Corene Houston Dodd and Willie Dodd. His maternal grandmother, housewife Roxie Houston, had Native American ancestry, and his maternal grandfather, Louis Houston, was a carpenter and a Baptist minister. They also owned a farm in Winona. His father worked as a shoemaker; and, with Dodd's mother, had four children, of which Dodd was the youngest. Dodd's parents raised their children in the segregated community of Winona, before relocating to Chicago, Illinois in search of better opportunities. There, his father worked in the steel mills, and Dodd's family initially lived with his maternal aunt, Callie Mae Houston Freeman, on Chicago's South Side. His mother obtained a position as a maid at the Shoreland Hotel, and later became a certified dietician, and the owner of a restaurant and a dry cleaning business. After his father's death, Dodd returned to Winona, where he lived with his maternal grandparents.

African American executives--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Insurance executives--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Bank directors--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

African American teachers--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Louis Dodd, Section A2008\_140\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

Louis Dodd moved to the South Side of Chicago, Illinois, where he lived next door to his maternal aunt, Callie Mae Freeman, on Vincennes Avenue. In Chicago, he attended Edmund Burke Elementary School until the eighth grade. Dodd then returned to Winona, Mississippi, where he attended Winona High School, and was inspired by its principal, James Winbrush. After the deaths of his maternal grandparents, Dodd moved back to his mother's home in Chicago, where he attended the majority black Dunbar Vocational High School, while also working full time at the loading docks of the Montgomery Ward department store. He was a competitive student, and excelled in science, history and math; but, despite graduating valedictorian of his class of eight hundred students, was told by his high school guidance counselor not to pursue a college education. Nevertheless, Dodd was awarded a full football scholarship to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He also recalls events in Chicago like the annual Bud Billiken Parade.

Video Oral History Interview with Louis Dodd, Section A2008\_140\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Louis Dodd graduated from Dunbar Vocational High School in 1963. He tried out for the football team at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and was offered a full athletic scholarship. He was injured after one year, and returned to Chicago, Illinois, where he studied at the mostly white Chicago Teachers College. Dodd graduated in 1965, and passed his teaching certification exams, despite experiencing discrimination from the Chicago Board of Education examiners. He was then hired to teach language arts at Forrestville Upper Grade Center. During that time, Dodd partnered with teachers Nolan Harrison and Forest Bailey to found a rubber stamp company, Bailey's Stamps Works, which obtained contracts with Sears, Roebuck and Co.; Argonne National Laboratory; and the University of Chicago. After five years, Dodd left teaching; and, in 1971, was hired as an insurance agent at the Allstate Corporation, along with his two business partners. Dodd also describes the uprisings on Chicago's West Side in 1968.

Video Oral History Interview with Louis Dodd, Section A2008\_140\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

Louis Dodd was hired by the Allstate Corporation as an insurance agent in 1971. He was assigned to a Sears, Roebuck and Co. department store on State Street in

Chicago, Illinois, and became the store's second African American agent. There, he was partnered with a white agent who wrote policies for Dodd's customers, as the mostly white clientele refused to buy from an African American man. Shortly after, due to his high volume, Dodd was promoted to an office on the South Side of Chicago, where he remained for five years. His office then relocated to Matteson, Illinois to attract suburban clients, and Dodd became the area's top salesman, joining the Chairman's Inner Circle club. Later, Dodd established the independent Louis Dodd Insurance Agency, and founded a business on the South Side of Chicago, the Rolls Royce Car Wash, which also served as a gas and repair service station. Dodd describes his role at the Highland Community Bank, and talks about insurance redlining in the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Louis Dodd, Section A2008\_140\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Louis Dodd and his business partner, James White, entered the hospitality industry in 1980, with the purchase of the Esquire Lounge on the West Side of Chicago, Illinois. Through Dodd's marketing efforts, the business became financially successful. Dodd and White also owned the Kermit Coleman Medical Center, where they leased offices to health care providers. They later purchased land in Beecher, Illinois, but were forced out of the area due to their race. Dodd then attempted to invest with a group of African American businessmen who owned the Michigan Plaza Hotel, but was denied because of his young age. Nevertheless, in 1989, Dodd entered the hotel business with the purchase of the Dew Central Motel, and later the Chicago South Loop Hotel and the Amber Inn. At the Amber Inn, he built the Pearl's Place restaurant, which was designed by his daughter, Courtney Dodd. Dodd describes his advice to aspiring insurance agents, as well as his family and wife, Alma Dodd.

Video Oral History Interview with Louis Dodd, Section A2008\_140\_001\_006, TRT: 0:22:00 ?

Louis Dodd met his wife, Alma Dodd, in 1968, while they were both teachers in Chicago, Illinois. During that time, he taught at the Forrestville Upper Grade Center, while she worked at the nearby Woodson North Elementary School. After marrying, they raised three children together. Dodd describes his purchase of the South Parkway Inn, and its transition into the Chicago South Loop Hotel. He describes his plans for the future and his business philosophy. Dodd also reflects upon his life, family and concerns for the African American community.