

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable David N. Dinkins

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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>	Dinkins, David N.
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable David N. Dinkins,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 21, 2014 and March 4, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002 and 2014
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:05:20).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Mayor The Honorable David N. Dinkins (1927 - 2020) was the first African American Mayor of New York City. Dinkins focused on crime and problems of racial inequality and initiated a program called "Safe Streets, Safe City: Cops and Kids," reducing crime and expanding opportunities for New York's children. Despite losing the 1993 mayoral election, Dinkins has continued to be critical of problems within the criminal justice system, including abusive police and institutionalized racism in the courts. Dinkins was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 21, 2014 and March 4, 2002, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_005
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

David Norman Dinkins was born on July 10, 1927, in Trenton, New Jersey. He was raised in Trenton until the Depression, when his family moved to Harlem. Dinkins served in the United States Marine Corps during World War II. In 1950, he received his B.S. degree in mathematics from Howard University. Dinkins went on to graduate from Brooklyn Law School in 1956 with his LL.B. degree and then started a private law practice that he maintained until 1975.

Dinkins began his public service career in 1966 when he was elected to the New York State Assembly. He was president of the New York City Board of Elections, and served as City Clerk for ten years before his election as President of the Borough of Manhattan in 1985.

Dinkins was elected as the first African American Mayor of the City of New York in 1989. As Mayor, Dinkins initiated a program called "Safe Streets, Safe City: Cops and Kids," reducing crime and expanding opportunities for New York's children. He also established the Beacon community centers that offer New Yorkers a mix of social services ranging from recreation and job training in public schools after school hours.

Upon leaving office in 1993, Dinkins went on to serve as professor in the Practice of Public Affairs at the Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs, where he continues to teach and mentor young people striving towards careers of service. He also serves on the school's advisory board and hosts its annual Dinkins Leadership & Public Policy Forum. In 2003, the David N. Dinkins Professorship Chair in the Practice of

Urban & Public Affairs was established at Columbia University.

Dinkins is a founding member of the Black & Puerto Rican Legislative Caucus of New York State, the Council of Black Elected Democrats of New York State, and The One Hundred Black Men. He was also vice president of the United States Conference of Mayors, and is a member-at-large of the Black Leadership Forum.

Dinkins serves on the board of several non-profit and charitable organizations, including Association to Benefit Children; Children's Health Fund; The Nelson Mandela Children's Fund; Posse Foundation; Coalition for the Homeless, and USTA Serves. He is chairman emeritus of the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS and the Constituency for Africa (CFA), and serves on the steering committee of the Association for a Better New York and the New York Urban League Advisory Council. He serves on the board of New York City Global Partners and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the National Advisory Board of the International African American Museum.

Dinkins resides in New York City with his wife, Joyce Burrows Dinkins. They have two children – David Jr. and Donna Dinkins Hoggard – and two grandchildren – Jamal Hoggard and Kalila Dinkins Hoggard.

David N. Dinkins was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on March 4, 2002 and March 21, 2014.

Dinkins passed away on November 23, 2020.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable David N. Dinkins was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on March 21, 2014 and March 4, 2002, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. Mayor The Honorable David N. Dinkins (1927 - 2020) was the first African American Mayor of New York City. Dinkins focused on crime and problems of racial inequality and initiated a program called "Safe Streets, Safe City: Cops and Kids," reducing crime and expanding opportunities for New York's children. Despite losing the 1993 mayoral election, Dinkins has continued to be critical of problems within the criminal justice system, including abusive police and institutionalized racism in the courts.

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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.

# Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

**Persons:**

- Dinkins, David N.
- Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)
- Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

**Subjects:**

- African Americans--Interviews
- Dinkins, David N.--Interviews
- African American mayors--New York (State)--New York--Interviews.
- Divorce--Psychological aspects.
- African American families--New York (State).
- United States. Marine Corps.
- Howard University.
- Brooklyn Law School.
- Manhattan (New York, N.Y.). Office of the President.
- Rangel, Charles B.
- New York (N.Y.)--Politics and government.
- New York (State). Legislature. Assembly.
- African American legislators--New York--Interviews.
- New York (N.Y.). Board of Elections.
- Sutton, Percy E.
- African American politicians--New York (State)--History.

# Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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New York (N.Y.)

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# Occupations:

Mayor

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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 The Honorable David N. Dinkins, March 21, 2014 and March 4, 2002. 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 The Honorable David N. Dinkins, Section A2002\_005\_001\_001,  
TRT: 0:30:30 ?

David Dinkins describes where his parents grew up and how they met. He then talks briefly about his brother and sister, and the early death of his brother. Dinkins describes the pain of his parents' separation and then explains how his grandmother and mother raised him, but he later moved to Trenton to live with his father. Dinkins recalls his secondary school years and names some influential teachers. Next, he describes the traits he's taken from his parents. Dinkins details his early work life and how he was able, at first, to balance school and his job and then how he ultimately left school for a job. Then he describes his childhood personality. David Dinkins then gives an overview of his military career in the Marine Corps.

African American mayors--New York (State)--New York--Interviews.

Divorce--Psychological aspects.

African American families--New York (State).

United States. Marine Corps.

Howard University.

Brooklyn Law School.

Manhattan (New York, N.Y.). Office of the President.

Rangel, Charles B.

New York (N.Y.)--Politics and government.

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New York (N.Y.). Board of Elections

Sutton, Percy E.

African American politicians--New York (State)--History

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable David N. Dinkins, Section A2002\_005\_001\_002,  
TRT: 0:28:57 ?

David Dinkins describes his experiences in higher education, explaining how his time at Howard University and Brooklyn Law School inspired his career in politics. Dinkins discusses many influential professors and colleagues he met in college and law school, and shares the story of how he met his wife. Dinkins then describes his time as borough president of Manhattan.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable David N. Dinkins, Section A2002\_005\_001\_003,  
TRT: 0:30:14 ?

David Dinkins discusses his close relationship with Charles Rangel. Then, he speaks in depth about the history and importance of the Carver Democratic Club. Dinkins discusses New York's influential political figures listing names of those who worked with and inspired him. He explains how he was selected to run for the New York State Assembly and talks about the specifics of the position. Next, Dinkins discusses his tenure as the president of the New York City Board of Elections and then describes his responsibilities when he was City Clerk of New York. Dinkins adds more layers of detail on his friendship with U.S. Congressman Charlie Rangel. David Dinkins delineates the career of Percy Sutton and then goes on to discuss black New York City borough presidents.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable David N. Dinkins, Section A2002\_005\_002\_004,  
TRT: 4:29:24 ?

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable David N. Dinkins, Section A2002\_005\_002\_005,  
TRT: 5:28:25 ?

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable David N. Dinkins, Section A2002\_005\_002\_006,  
TRT: 6:30:11 ?

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable David N. Dinkins, Section A2002\_005\_002\_007,  
TRT: 7:07:39 ?