

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Art Minson

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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>	Minson, Art, 1914-2005
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Art Minson,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 1, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:02:33).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Community leader and labor activist Art Minson (1914 - 2005 ) made community service a lifetime commitment in Akron, Ohio, serving his community for over 50 years. Minson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 1, 2002, in Akron, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_174
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Respected community leader and labor activist Art Minson has made community service a lifetime commitment. The Akron, Ohio, resident was known for tireless efforts to organize people and advocate for his community, particularly Akron's East Side. Minson was born in West Virginia in 1914 and later moved to Akron from the Deep South when he was 5 years old. For more than forty years, Minson was an employee of Goodyear, where he retired in 1980 as a racing tire inspector. Active as an official with the United Rubber Workers, Minson continued to advocate for higher wages for workers in Akron, a city devastated by an increasingly global economy. Recognizing his special talent for organizing people, Minson has spent a lifetime involved in various community service causes.

Minson was particularly active through his church. More than twenty years ago, Minson helped start a food pantry at his church to serve the hungry. He also began a project designed to educate people in the community. Minson was a board member of Ohio Citizen Action and active with East Akron Community House and National Peoples Action. Minson acted as an adviser to the Millennium Children's Fund and was instrumental in establishing the East Akron Development Corporation.

In May 2002, the Akron community presented him with the Cliff Skeen Lifetime Achievement Award for a life spent in service to his community. After a half-century as an activist and community servant, Minson continued to act on his belief that community organizing can make a difference. Minson passed away on December 14, 2005.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Art Minson was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 1, 2002, in Akron, Ohio, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Community leader and labor activist Art Minson (1914 - 2005 ) made community service a lifetime commitment in Akron, Ohio, serving his community for over 50 years.

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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:

Minson, Art, 1914-2005

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Minson, Art, 1914-2005--Interviews

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Neighborhood leaders--Interviews

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Human rights workers--Interviews

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African American civic leaders--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:

Community Leader

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Labor Activist

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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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 Art Minson, August 1, 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 Art Minson, Section A2002\_174\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:35 ?

Art Minson talks about his family background. Minson was born in 1914 to Walter and Florence Minson. He talks about how his grandmother who was stricken with polio did not share stories of his ancestors. His parents were sharecroppers in Fitzgerald, Georgia until his father moved north because the sharecropper system kept him in debt. His father originally had hoped to work for Ford Motor Company in Detroit, Michigan. However, after a year of mining

in Fairmont, West Virginia, his father moved to Akron, Ohio to build a gym and theater and he also swept the floors for Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. Minson recalls the smell of the rubber factories in Akron, Ohio during the 1920s where many black people and immigrants moved for work. Minson's family lived in Akron's Tobin Heights neighborhood where they lived in tar paper shacks and used outhouses. Minson had two sisters and recalls playing with a Syrian boy as a child.

Neighborhood leaders--Interviews.

Human rights workers--Interviews.

African American civic leaders--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Art Minson, Section A2002\_174\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:45 ?

Art Minson details how racism affected his life. As a boy, Minson's friendship with a Syrian immigrant was made complicated because of race. However, in adulthood, Minson's Syrian friend served heroically in World War II and they reconnected at a parade held in his friend's honor. Minson recalls the Ku Klux Klan burning crosses in his family's yard. His father looked almost white and his mother was dark-skinned, and they mistook them an interracial couple. In grade school, Minson was one of two black children. During high school, Minson played track, football, and played the trumpet. He also liked to box and wrestle at the East Akron Community House. As an adult, Minson volunteered there under its director Homer Pettingill. When Minson graduated from East High School in Akron, Ohio in 1934, the graduation service was moved to a church downtown out of fear of the KKK. Following graduation, Minson worked at the airport where he became interested in meteorology. His instructor soon told him that he would not be eligible to take the test due to his race.

Video Oral History Interview with Art Minson, Section A2002\_174\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:16 ?

Art Minson developed his interest in political activism after being discouraged from pursuing a career in meteorology. In the years leading up to World War II, Minson was employed the Works Progress Administration [WPA] and trained to be a pattern maker. He also took a job at Goodyear Rubber and Tire in Akron, Ohio where he worked for forty years. During this time, Minson started the Art Minson Orchestra with sixteen jazz musicians. He also played with Scatman Crothers. As an official with the United Rubber Workers and a volunteer at East Akron Community House, Minson became an ardent community organizer, and he organized groups to travel to Washington, D.C. to advocate for issues. Minson participated in the 1989 March on Washington and advocated for President Ronald Reagan to address fair housing policy.

Video Oral History Interview with Art Minson, Section A2002\_174\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:57 ?

Art Minson talks about his lifelong commitment to community service. Minson was instrumental in starting the East Akron Neighborhood Development Corporation which focused on economic issues complementing the social programs offered by the East Akron Community House. His interest in fair housing can be traced to 1946 when he was asked to pay twice as much a white couple for the house he wanted to buy. A white couple purchased the house for the lower price and allowed Minson to repay them. Although many encouraged him to run for elected office, Minson's approach to community organizing was hands on. He would go door to door and explain the issues to people in a way that they could understand. Minson wants to be remembered as someone who served his community. Minson concludes by narrating his photographs.