

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Marcus O. Tucker

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Tucker, Marcus O., 1934-2015
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Marcus O. Tucker,
Dates:	November 22, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:15:42).
Abstract:	Superior court judge The Honorable Marcus O. Tucker (1934 - 2015) served as a Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge. Tucker was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 22, 2002, in Long Beach, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2002_209
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Marcus O. Tucker, Jr. was born in Santa Monica, California, on November 12, 1934. His father was a physician who migrated from Kansas and his mother a teacher and realtor from Georgia.

Tucker graduated from University High School in Los Angeles in 1952. He briefly attended Fisk University but soon transferred to the University of Southern California. There, Tucker was an honor student and majored in international studies. When he earned his B.A. in 1956 his plan was to attend Law School. His uncle, Chicago lawyer James McClendon, was a role model who became an Illinois state senator. Tucker attended Howard University Law School and served on the editorial staff of the *Howard Law School Journal* from 1959 to 1960. He matriculated with a distinguished class that also included Vernon Jordan. Tucker earned a J.D. in 1960 and in 1997 earned an MA. in Criminal Justice from Chapman University.

Returning to Santa Monica, Tucker served as the first Santa Monica African American deputy city attorney in the criminal division from 1963 to 1965. He was an assistant U.S. attorney in the Los Angeles Criminal Division from 1965 to 1967. Tucker was the first African American to serve as presiding judge of the Long Beach Municipal Court in 1977 and was a supervising or presiding judge in Los Angeles-area juvenile courts from 1987 to 1994. In 1985, he became judge of the Los Angeles County Superior Court. As presiding judge of the Los Angeles Juvenile Courts, Tucker was in charge of the largest system in the United States. Tucker innovated low-cost drug testing for parents under the court's jurisdiction, referrals for community resources and a new system for tort lawyers. Tucker initiated Teen Courts with peer juries and closely monitored truancy rates. He also established a playground facility for children awaiting court action.

As a member of the John Mercer Langston Bar Association, Tucker initiated the History of Black Lawyers in Los Angeles project. Among his many honors and affiliations, Tucker was named to the National Bar Association Hall

of Fame in 2002.

Tucker was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* in 2002.

Tucker passed away on August 8, 2015.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Marcus O. Tucker was conducted by Larry Crowe on November 22, 2002, in Long Beach, California, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Superior court judge The Honorable Marcus O. Tucker (1934 - 2015) served as a Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge.

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:

Tucker, Marcus O., 1934-2015

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Tucker, Marcus O., 1934-2015--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Los Angeles County (Calif.)

Occupations:

Superior 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 Marcus O. Tucker, November 22, 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).

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 Marcus O. Tucker, Section
A2002_209_001_001, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Marcus O. Tucker describes his family background. His father, Marcus O. Tucker, Sr., was born to Elizabeth Tucker in Dalton, Missouri in 1896. He received his B.S. degree in Chemistry from Kansas State University, and an M.D. degree from Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee, where he met his wife, Essie McLendon. McLendon was born in 1904 in Washington, Georgia to Toombs McLendon, a prominent farmer and the alleged son of a Confederate general. She attended Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and married Marcus O. Tucker, Sr. in the 1920s. The couple moved to Santa Monica, California in 1932, and gave birth to Marcus O. Tucker, Jr. on November 12, 1934. Tucker, Sr., was an OB/GYN, while McLendon was a teacher and a real estate broker. Tucker, Jr. struggled in school, so his mother enrolled him at the University of California, Los Angeles, Teacher Training School around 1944. He went on to attend University High School in Los Angeles, California, where he played on the football team.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Marcus O. Tucker, Section
A2002_209_001_002, TRT: 0:29:45 ?

Marcus O. Tucker was raised in a prominent household in Santa Monica, California. However many of his peers in the community lacked role models, or hope for the future. Tucker graduated from University High School in Los Angeles, California in 1953, and enrolled at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, where he played football. After a semester, he transferred to the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, California. Though he was pressured by his parents to become a doctor, Tucker chose to major in international relations. He also pledged Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, and graduated with his B.A. degree in 1956. After visiting his uncle, Senator James A. McLendon, in Chicago, Illinois, Tucker was inspired to become a lawyer. He planned to attend Howard University School of Law, but was pressured by his mother to enroll at Loyola University Law School in Los Angeles, California in 1957. Tucker did not enjoy his experience at the school, and transferred to Howard University School of Law in 1958.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Marcus O. Tucker, Section
A2002_209_001_003, TRT: 0:29:51 ?

In 1958, Marcus O. Tucker enrolled at Howard University School of Law, where he was inspired by faculty members James Nabrit, Herbert Reid and George E.C. Hayes. He also enjoyed attending lectures at Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel, given by activists like Vernon Johns. Tucker was classmates with HistoryMaker Vernon Jordan, and was acquainted with HistoryMaker Douglas Wilder and Diane Nash. After graduating with his J.D. degree in 1960, Tucker served in the U.S. Army for six months before opening a private practice in Santa Monica, California. In 1963, Tucker was hired by the City of Santa Monica as Assistant City Attorney. In 1965, he married his wife, Indira Tucker, and was hired as Assistant U.S. Attorney in Los Angeles, California. Tucker returned to private practice in 1967, and in 1975, was appointed as a Superior Court Commissioner. In 1977, Tucker was appointed as the first African American judge of Long Beach Municipal Court. In 1987, Tucker began presiding over juvenile courts in Los Angeles County.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Marcus O. Tucker, Section
A2002_209_001_004, TRT: 0:29:26 ?

In 1987, Marcus O. Tucker was appointed as the presiding judge of the Los Angeles Juvenile Courts, where he emphasized education. Tucker required

minors to attend school, improve their grades, and pursue traditional curriculum (rather than independent studies), to avoid jail time. A large percentage of the minors whose cases Tucker has presided over have gone on to obtain their GEDs, attend community college, and enroll in universities. Tucker notes the weaknesses in the juvenile penal system, and describes why parents are crucial to the juvenile penal process. Civically, Tucker is involved in the John Mercer Langston Bar Association. He served as the organization's president for two terms in the 1980s, and spearheaded the organization's History of the Black Lawyers of Los Angeles oral history project. Tucker's hopes and concerns for the African American community include lack of black male leadership and educational gaps within the community.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Marcus O. Tucker, Section A2002_209_001_005, TRT: 0:16:30 ?

Marcus O. Tucker talks about the false sense of opportunity athletic excellence provides to young people. He also notes that academic excellence and success should be emphasized in the black community, instead. Tucker reflects upon his legacy, as well as how he would like to be remembered. He closes the interview by narrating his photographs.