

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Father Richard L. Tolliver

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Tolliver, Richard
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Father Richard L. Tolliver,
Dates:	February 19, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:49:35).
Abstract:	Priest Father Richard L. Tolliver (1945 -) was the rector of St. Edmund's Episcopal Church in Chicago. In addition to his work within the church, Tolliver was also a major force in rebuilding the surrounding community of his parishioners, and improving living and social conditions. Tolliver was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 19, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_030
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Father Richard L. Tolliver served as the rector of St. Edmund's Episcopal Church in Chicago, located on the city's South Side in the Washington Park neighborhood. A native of Springfield, Ohio, Tolliver held degrees from several institutions, including a B.A. degree in religion from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio; a master of divinity degree from the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts; M.A. degrees in political science and Afro-American studies from Boston University; and a Ph.D. in political science from Howard University in Washington, D.C.

Tolliver became an ordained Episcopal priest in December 1971; after his ordination, he served as a rector for St. Cyprian's Church in Boston and St. Timothy's Church in Washington, D.C., and was a curate for St. Philip's Church in New York, New York. Tolliver also served as an associate country director of the U.S. Peace Corps in Kenya, and as a Peace Corps country director in Mauritania.

After his time in the Peace Corps, Tolliver took a position as a professor at Howard University. In June 1989, Tolliver became the rector at St. Edmund's Church; the church, which was established in 1905 to serve a congregation of largely Greek and Irish heritage, had become a largely African American congregation by the 1920s, serving the city's black middle- and upper-middle class families. At the time of his arrival, St. Edmund's suffered from financial problems and a surrounding neighborhood in decay. Tolliver formed the St. Edmund's Redevelopment Corporation (SERC) in 1990, which was designed to buy and rehabilitate multifamily buildings. Tolliver also organized the Michigan Avenue/Indiana Block Club, which was comprised of St. Edmund's parishioners who worked to reduce criminal activity in the church's surrounding neighborhood. The Michigan Avenue/Indiana Block Club also worked in conjunction with the Chicago Police Department's Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy. St. Edmund's also opened the International Charter School - St. Edmund's Campus on June 30, 2000, with an enrollment of 150 students in kindergarten through fifth grade.

Under the auspices of Tolliver and the SERC, more than 455 housing units were rebuilt; crime has also decreased sharply in the area since 1993. Tolliver's accomplishments have been featured in several publications, such as *Business Week* and *Ebony*; he received numerous honors and awards, including being listed in *Who's Who of Black Americans*, and being a regional finalist for a White House Fellowship.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Father Richard L. Tolliver was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 19, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Priest Father Richard L. Tolliver (1945 -) was the rector of St. Edmund's Episcopal Church in Chicago. In addition to his work within the church, Tolliver was also a major force in rebuilding the surrounding community of his parishioners, and improving living and social conditions.

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:

Tolliver, Richard

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Tolliver, Richard--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Priest

HistoryMakers® Category:

ReligionMakers

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 Father Richard L. Tolliver, February 19, 2003. 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 Father Richard L. Tolliver, Section A2003_030_001_001, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Episcopalian priest Richard L. Tolliver discusses his family background and recalls his childhood in Springfield, Ohio. Tolliver tells the story of his genealogical efforts, tracing one side of his family back to the 18th century. He discusses his mother's and father's backgrounds and describes his life living with his extended family. Tolliver shares some of his favorite pastimes and recreations from when he was a child.

Video Oral History Interview with Father Richard L. Tolliver, Section A2003_030_001_002, TRT: 0:30:20 ?

Episcopalian priest Richard L. Tolliver details his schooling, from his elementary and high school days in Springfield, Ohio, up through his undergraduate study at Miami University of Ohio. Tolliver describes his academic interests and extracurricular activities during high school and explains why he chose to attend Miami University. He then discusses his experience with racism on campus and details his involvement in social activism to help combat racism and discrimination.

Video Oral History Interview with Father Richard L. Tolliver, Section A2003_030_001_003, TRT: 0:30:05 ?

Episcopalian priest Richard L. Tolliver describes his path to becoming a member of the clergy, and explains his reasons for wanting to attend divinity school. Tolliver describes his time at the divinity schools of both Howard University and Harvard University, detailing the social and political events of the 1960s and discussing how they affected his time in divinity school. In particular, Tolliver focuses on the uprising in Washington, D.C. following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Video Oral History Interview with Father Richard L. Tolliver, Section A2003_030_001_004, TRT: 0:29:45 ?

Episcopalian priest Richard L. Tolliver recalls memorable encounters with one of his mentors and idols, Dr. Benjamin Mays, and shares some of the lessons Mays taught him. Tolliver discusses some of the theologians who influenced him, including James Cone and Vincent Franklin. Tolliver then details the history of African American participation in the American Episcopalian church, explaining the rise in stature of black clergy in the 20th century.

Video Oral History Interview with Father Richard L. Tolliver, Section A2003_030_001_005, TRT: 0:31:25 ?

Episcopalian priest Richard L. Tolliver explains the history of black leadership in the Episcopalian church and outlines the hierarchy of the Episcopalian clergy. Tolliver then enters a deep discussion about his time spent in Africa working for the Peace Corps. Tolliver presents a detailed cultural comparison of the two nations in which he worked, Kenya and Mauritania. Tolliver comments on what he describes as American cultural arrogance abroad, and then begins a discussion of a visit to Papua New Guinea.

Video Oral History Interview with Father Richard L. Tolliver, Section A2003_030_001_006, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Episcopalian priest Richard L. Tolliver details his role as Rector of St. Edmund's Episcopal Church in Chicago, explaining how he came to the job, and detailing the dire situation faced by the church and its surrounding neighborhood of Washington Park. Tolliver outlines the steps he took to revitalize the church and the community, including rebuilding housing in the area, revamping the parochial school, and overhauling the aesthetics of the church with Afrocentric stained glass windows. Tolliver reflects on the most satisfying aspects of his efforts, as well as addressing some of the inherent challenges.

Video Oral History Interview with Father Richard L. Tolliver, Section A2003_030_001_007, TRT: 0:31:20 ?

Episcopalian priest Richard L. Tolliver shares his personal religious philosophy and explains how he uses his own beliefs to shape his sermons and encourage both his parishoners and in the black church in general. Tolliver details his pluralist views and advocates the embracing of gays and lesbians in the church. Tolliver also considers his legacy and how he would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Father Richard L. Tolliver, Section A2003_030_001_008, TRT: 0:17:40 ?

Richard L. Tolliver narrates his photographs.