

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with W. Gregory Wims

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Wims, W. Gregory, 1949-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with W. Gregory Wims,
Dates:	August 24, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:58:20).
Abstract:	Business consulting chief executive W. Gregory Wims (1949 -) was the former president of the Montgomery County Chapter of the NAACP, the Maryland NAACP, and served as the vice president of the Maryland Youth Commission. Wims was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 24, 2004, in Gaithersburg, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_142
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

William Gregory Wims was born on September 2, 1949 in Bethesda, Maryland. His mother worked as a domestic and his father was a laborer. He earned his high school diploma from Gaithersburg, High School in 1968, where he played on the track and football teams and was active in civil rights sit-ins.

From 1968 until 1970, Wims attended Montgomery College in Rockville, Maryland. In 1969, he was named the Vice President of the Maryland Youth Commission. In 1970 he transferred to Howard University but left before earning his degree.

In 1972, Wims was hired as the coordinator for the Extension Service for the 4-H Club of Montgomery County. In 1974, he became the first male Head Start Teacher in Montgomery County and worked on Republican Newton Stears' campaign for Congress. From 1976 until 1978, he worked as Stears' legislative assistant and became the first African American professional from Montgomery County to work on Capitol Hill. In 1978, Wims became a legislative assistant for Congressman Melvin Evans. From 1981 until 1989, he worked in the legislative affairs office for the Secretary of Agriculture and a Special Assistant to the Director for Minority Affairs and Economic Development. In 1989 he started his consulting firm, Hammer and Nails, which assists local businesses in working with the federal government.

In the early 1990s, Wims served as the membership chairperson for the NAACP, recruiting more than a thousand new members. In 1994, he was elected president of the Montgomery County Chapter of the NAACP. During his tenure, he was successful in highlighting discrimination claims of African American employees at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The NIH case received local and national media coverage and led to Wims becoming president of the Maryland NAACP chapter. In 1996, Wims founded the Victims Rights Foundation (VRF), an organization providing financial and emotional support to crime victims. Through the VRF Wims was able to provide thousands of dollars to the families of the Washington, D.C. sniper victims in 2003.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with W. Gregory Wims was conducted by Racine Tucker Hamilton on August 24, 2004, in Gaithersburg, Maryland, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Business consulting chief executive W. Gregory Wims (1949 -) was the former president of the Montgomery County Chapter of the NAACP, the Maryland NAACP, and served as the vice president of the Maryland Youth Commission.

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:

Wims, W. Gregory, 1949-

Hamilton, Racine Tucker (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Wims, W. Gregory, 1949---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Association Branch Chief Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 W. Gregory Wims, August 24, 2004. 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 W. Gregory Wims, Section A2004_142_001_001, TRT: 0:30:09
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W. Gregory Wims was born on September 2, 1949 in Bethesda, Maryland. His mother, Rachel Stewart Wims, was born in 1919 in Gaithersburg, Maryland. Her great-grandfather was a freedman who gave his name to the community of Stewart Town in Gaithersburg. Rachel Wims grew up on the family farm, and became a leader in the local church. Wims' father, Earl Alexandir Wims, was

born in 1915 in Germantown, Maryland. He left school after third grade to work full-time, and never completed his education. W. Gregory Wims grew up on a farm in the close-knit neighborhood of Stewart Town, where there was no electricity and he walked nearly a mile to the school bus stop. He had three brothers, the youngest of whom was twelve years older than him. He began school at an all-black elementary school, but moved to the integrated Gaithersburg Elementary School in third grade. There, Wims faced racial insults and was once slapped by a teacher. Next, he attended Gaithersburg Junior High School, where was a hurdler on the track team.

Video Oral History Interview with W. Gregory Wims, Section A2004_142_001_002, TRT: 0:30:44
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W. Gregory Wims aspired to be a bus driver while at Gaithersburg Senior High School. While in high school, he attended the March on Washington in 1963 and became active in his local chapter of the NAACP. In twelfth grade, Wims improved his grades in order to qualify for Montgomery College in Rockville, Maryland, where he was elected vice president of the State of Maryland's Youth Council and then was appointed as the youngest ever member of the Montgomery County Human Relations Commission. Wims transferred to Howard University in Washington, D.C. but dropped out after his junior year in 1972. He took jobs with the Extension Service 4-H program and then the successful congressional campaign of Newton Steers, which led him to work on Capitol Hill from 1976 to 1980. He worked on the presidential campaign of Ronald Reagan in 1980, and when Reagan was elected, was employed in the Department of Agriculture and the Small Business Administration, where he helped manage the 8(a) program for minority-owned businesses.

Video Oral History Interview with W. Gregory Wims, Section A2004_142_001_003, TRT: 0:29:56
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W. Gregory Wims left his job in the administration of President Ronald Reagan in 1989, and founded a management consulting company called Hammer and Nails, Inc. He also became active in the Montgomery County branch of the NAACP, becoming its director of membership in 1990 and president in 1992. He led a campaign to help African American employees at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) who had been discriminated against in consideration for raises and promotions, and succeeded in getting the director of the NIH to apologize for this practice. Wims led similarly successful campaigns against GEICO and Hughes Network Systems. In 1994, Wims became president of the Maryland branch of the NAACP, where he led redistricting efforts aimed to increase African American representation in local government on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. He also founded a task force to study workplace discrimination in the federal government. Wims expresses his wish that the NAACP return to holding more public demonstrations.

Video Oral History Interview with W. Gregory Wims, Section A2004_142_001_004, TRT: 0:27:31
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W. Gregory Wims, in the late 1990s, started the Victims' Rights Foundation, an all-volunteer organization to help the families of victims of violent crimes with fundraising and moral support throughout trial proceedings. During the Beltway sniper attacks in 2002, the Victims' Rights Foundation raised \$32,600 for the family of each victim. The fact that his foundation is entirely volunteer based makes it different from the Stephanie Roper Foundation, which has a similar mission. At the time of the interview, Wims planned to expand the foundation nationally, specifically to Charleston, South Carolina and Los Angeles, California. He describes his hopes for the African American community and

considers whether he would have done anything differently in life. He reflects on the importance of history, his personal values, and his hopes for the future. Wims describes how he would like to be remembered and reflects upon his legacy. He concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.