

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Hall, Shelvin Jerome, 1916-2007
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall,
Dates:	June 1, 2005 and June 3, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	9 Betacame SP videocassettes (4:08:35).
Abstract:	Pastor and religious leader Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall (1916 - 2007) served for twenty-five years as the dean of the Baptist General State Congress of Christian Education in Illinois, in addition to holding several high ranking positions in such organizations as the West Side Baptist Ministers Conference; the National Board of Directors, One Church/One Child Program; the West Side Baptist Ministers Association; and the Baptist General State Convention of Illinois. Hall was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 1, 2005 and June 3, 2005, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_125
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Rev. Shelvin Jerome Hall was born May 3, 1916, in Yoakum, Texas. Graduating Magna cum Laude from Bishop College in Marshall, Texas, in 1944, Hall married Lucy M. Lewis that same year. Hall pursued a graduate degree in high school administration at Prairie View A&M University in 1949, and graduate studies in divinity from Howard University.

In 1955, Hall was appointed pastor of Friendship Baptist Church on Chicago's West Side. After his initial appointment, Hall moved the church several times, increasing the membership to over 1,500. Hall became supervisor of the General Division of the National Baptist Convention in 1960, and subsequently served for twenty-five years as the dean of the Baptist General State Congress of Christian Education in Illinois; president of the West Side Baptist Ministers Conference; president of the National Board of Directors, One Church/One Child Program; president of the West Side Baptist Ministers Association; and president of the Baptist General State Convention of Illinois. Hall was also the founding chairman of the Community Bank of Lawndale; president of the West Side Isaiah Plan; chairman of the Family Division of the Chicago Area Boy Scouts of America; executive director of the Inter-Religious Council on Urban Affairs; president of the Local Redevelopment Authority of Lawndale; president of the NAACP West Side Branch; president of the Midwest Community Council; and founding board member of Operation PUSH.

When Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. tried to establish a movement on the West Side of Chicago, Hall, then president of the West Side Federation, opened his church and offered King hospitality and access. Happily married, Hall and his wife raised New York State Supreme Court Justice Priscilla Hall, Illinois Appellate Court Judge Shelvin Louise

Hall, and Lewis Hall, Supervisor of Higher Education for the New York Department of Education.

Hall passed away on May 21, 2007 at the age of 91.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 1, 2005 and June 3, 2005, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 9 Betacame SP videocassettes. Pastor and religious leader Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall (1916 - 2007) served for twenty-five years as the dean of the Baptist General State Congress of Christian Education in Illinois, in addition to holding several high ranking positions in such organizations as the West Side Baptist Ministers Conference; the National Board of Directors, One Church/One Child Program; the West Side Baptist Ministers Association; and the Baptist General State Convention of Illinois.

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:

Hall, Shelvin Jerome, 1916-2007

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Hall, Shelvin Jerome, 1916-2007--Interviews

African American religious leaders--Interviews

African American clergy--Interviews

African American civic leaders--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Pastor

Religious Leader

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 Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall, June 1, 2005 and June 3, 2005. 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 Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall, Section
A2005_125_001_001, TRT: 0:28:10 ?

Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall was born on May 3, 1916 in Yoakum, Texas, the youngest of three children. His mother, Mayme Shelvin Hall, was born in Texas to Priscilla Shelvin, who was raised in slavery but had great entrepreneurial skill, which she used to obtain a position with a white family in Houston, Texas. Hall's mother and his maternal uncle, Elijah Shelvin, attended Guadalupe College in Seguin, Texas and later, became teachers. His father, Will Hall, was born in Hallettsville, Texas. In Yoakum, Will Hall ran a barbershop and served as marshal of the Juneteenth parade. He owned a home at 112 East Hochheim Street in an integrated neighborhood, across the street from the white Sheckels family, owners of the city's ice plant. Hall's paternal grandmother, Renetta Hall, owned Yoakum's largest hotel, and he worked at her gas station as a boy. Hall recounts his memories of the Great Depression, when the Southern Pacific Railroad factory in Yoakum closed and many black-owned companies went out of business.

African American religious leaders--Interviews.

African American clergy--Interviews.

African American civic leaders--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall, Section
A2005_125_001_002, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall's maternal grandmother wanted her children to pursue education rather than work in the cotton fields. His father was tried for murder and was freed on the insistence of one juror. Hall pursued piano and choral training as a child. He attended many schools, including Westhoff Elementary School, moving wherever his mother taught. Due to poor eyesight, Hall attended high school at the Texas Deaf, Dumb and Blind Institute for Colored Youth in Austin, Texas. He sang in his school choir, which was directed by Helen Grant and Ann Grant, and performed for the Texas state legislature. Hall graduated in 1933, and worked odd jobs for years during the Great Depression. He ran the Baptist Training Union in Yoakum, Texas, which motivated him to enroll at Bishop College in Marshall, Texas to become a minister. There, Hall's classmates included HistoryMaker Reverend Dr. Marvin Griffin and Harold Thompson. He graduated magna cum laude in 1944, and became a teacher in Carthage, Texas.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall, Section
A2005_125_001_003, TRT: 0:31:10 ?

Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall served as president of the Baptist Training Union in Yoakum, Texas. Unsatisfied with his job and wages during the Great Depression, Hall enrolled at Bishop College in Marshall, Texas by hitchhiking across the State of Texas without money for food. When he graduated, he taught school in Carthage, Texas. Hall recalls meeting his future wife, Lucy Mae Lewis, when she replaced her sister Ernestine Lewis as his secretary for one

summer. After he bought a 1939 Ford car, he began traveling hundreds of miles every other weekend to El Campo, Texas to pastor a church. Hall convinced El Campo postal officials to deliver mail to African American residents by leading a drive to put up numbers on unnumbered homes. Some of his congregation warned him that whites in El Campo planned to run him out of town, but Hall was unworried, and the threats subsided. Later, he participated in the Selma to Montgomery march, despite being pressured not to go by Mayor Richard J. Daley of Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall, Section
A2005_125_001_004, TRT: 0:28:10 ?

Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall attended annual meetings of the Lacey Kirk Williams Institute in Marshall, Texas. He briefly pastored St. John Baptist Church in Corpus Christi, Texas, but left after a disagreement with the congregation about the morality of homosexuality. Reverend S.H. Graham, a family friend, recommended him to Friendship Baptist Church in Chicago, which then appointed Hall as pastor in 1955. Hall and his family bought a home in Maywood, Illinois, where his children attended Proviso East High School. Due to racial discrimination, Hall's wife had to pressure the school to place their daughter in college preparatory courses. Hall invited Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to speak at Friendship Baptist Church while King lived in North Lawndale, Chicago in 1966. Hall was offered bribes to support Mayor Richard J. Daley's political machine, but refused. Hall became the president of the West Side Baptist Ministers Conference and the West Side Federation, activist groups that opposed Daley.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall, Section
A2005_125_002_005, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall was president of the West Side Baptist Ministers Conference in Chicago during the 1960s. He was one of two conference members to join the Selma to Montgomery march in 1965. Along with Baptist pastor Reverend J.M. Stone, Catholic priest Daniel Mallette, and Jewish leader Lew Kreinberg, Hall supported the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s movement. He recalls sleeping on pallets and pianos and evading the dangers of Ku Klux Klan night riders during the Selma marches. When Dr. King lived in North Lawndale, Chicago in 1966 and 1967 to advocate for fair housing, Hall hosted him at Friendship Baptist Church for a speech before thousands of people. He welcomed Dr. King despite the opposition of Mayor Richard J. Daley of Chicago, who tried to bribe Hall for his support. Hall also describes the development that occurred in North Lawndale in the 1970s, including hundreds of units of community housing and the founding of the Community Bank of Lawndale in 1977.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall, Section
A2005_125_002_006, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall joined the National Baptist Convention as pastor of Friendship Baptist Church in Chicago, Illinois. The convention's president, Dr. Joseph H. Jackson, did not want the church involved in the Civil Rights Movement. Hall disagreed, but did not join HistoryMaker Reverend Gardner Taylor's rival Progressive National Baptist Convention. Hall was the first black board chairman at the Midwest Community Council, where he worked with its longtime president Nancy Jefferson. As chairman, he attended Queen Elizabeth II's visit to Chicago in 1959. In 1962, Hall moved his church to a former synagogue in North Lawndale, Chicago, where he partnered with Mary Nelson and HistoryMaker The Honorable Cardiss Collins to improve the

community. Hall also founded the Community Bank of Lawndale in 1977 in partnership with HistoryMaker Elzie Higginbottom, Cecil Butler, and James Hadley. In 1983, he built a new Friendship Baptist Church, using African architectural elements in the design.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall, Section
A2005_125_002_007, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall was pastor of Friendship Baptist Church in Chicago, Illinois when Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in 1968. He recalls the violence around the church and suspicions in the community over the origin of the riots. Hall used African architecture such as a pyramid roof in the design of the new Friendship Baptist Church, which was built by architects Weese, Seegers, Hickey and Weese. It opened in 1983. His congregation originally opposed the design, but eventually supported the new church building strongly enough that its mortgage was paid off by 1987. Hall explains his spiritual philosophy, emphasizing the importance of having patience with God's plan. He describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community and offers his views on black theology. Hall reflects on his upbringing in the integrated town of Yoakum, Texas, his decision to join the ministry, and why he decided against pursuing a career in jazz after seeing Duke Ellington perform.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall, Section
A2005_125_002_008, TRT: 0:31:09 ?

Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall raised his three children in Maywood, Illinois with his wife, Lucy Lewis Hall. He pushed them to achieve quality educations, but warned them that he would not offer help or money if they committed a crime or needed to pay for an abortion. His children are L. Priscilla Hall, a justice on the New York Supreme Court; HistoryMaker The Honorable Shelvin Louise Hall, a justice for the Illinois Appellate Court; and Lewis Hall, a supervisor for the New York Department of Education. Hall recounts a story of fearing for his life as a teenage boy while he spoke with a white female store clerk. He reflects upon his legacy and describes how he would like to be remembered. Hall also narrates his photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall, Section
A2005_125_002_009, TRT: 0:10:16 ?

Reverend Dr. Shelvin Jerome Hall narrates his photographs.