

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Cecil L. "Chip" Murray

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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>	Murray, Cecil
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Cecil L. "Chip" Murray,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 28, 2006 and October 3, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005 and 2006
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:50:38).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Religious leader Reverend Cecil L. "Chip" Murray (1929 - ) served as senior pastor of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church in Los Angeles from 1977 to 2004. Murray was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 28, 2006 and October 3, 2005, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_225
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Reverend Cecil L. Murray was born on September 26, 1929, in Lakeland, Florida, to Janie Belle Williams Murray and Edward Wilder Murray, Sr. Murray's mother passed away when he was only four years old; he would be raised by his father who was devastated by his wife's untimely passing. Growing up in the segregated South, Murray, his father, and his brother experienced profound racism firsthand.

Murray earned his undergraduate degree from Florida A&M University, but joined the United States Air Force after graduation where he served during the Korean War as a jet radar intercept officer in the Air Defense Command, and as a navigator in the Air Transport Command. Murray retired as a reserve major in 1958, after ten years, and was decorated with a Soldier's Medal of Valor. After Murray left the U.S. Air Force, he attended the School of Theology at Claremont College in California, where he earned his Ph.D. degree in religion.

Murray's first church was in Pomona, California, where he helped grow a congregation of just twelve members to a group of 150. Murray later served at Trinity A.M.E. in Kansas City from 1966 to 1971; the First African Methodist Episcopal (FAME) Church in Seattle; and Los Angeles' FAME Church in 1977, after Bishop H.H. Brookins recruited him to join. Under Murray, the congregation grew from several hundred members in 1977, to roughly 18,000.

Murray became a nationally known figure in the wake of the 1992 Los Angeles riots; he also became actively involved in the issues of job-training, homeowner loans, affordable housing, condom distribution, and HIV/AIDS awareness. Murray started FAME Renaissance, a non-profit organization that focused on economic development.

Murray retired as Senior Pastor from the FAME church on September 25, 2004. In 2005, Murray became a senior fellow at the Center for Religion and Civic Culture (CRCC) and continues to work as a liaison to the Los Angeles area, and to African American and Latino constituents. Murray also works on the Passing the Mantle project,

which aimed to train clergy from African American churches across California in effective community development and organizing skills.

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# Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reverend Cecil L. "Chip" Murray was conducted by Paul Brock on March 28, 2006 and October 3, 2005, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Religious leader Reverend Cecil L. "Chip" Murray (1929 - ) served as senior pastor of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church in Los Angeles from 1977 to 2004.

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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:

Murray, Cecil

Brock, Paul (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Murray, Cecil--Interviews

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African American clergy--Interviews

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African American civic leaders--Interviews

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African American Methodists--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:

Religious Leader

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

ReligionMakers

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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 Reverend Cecil L. "Chip" Murray, March 28, 2006 and October 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).

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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 Reverend Cecil L. "Chip" Murray, Section A2005\_225\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:59 ?

Reverend Cecil L. "Chip" Murray was born on September 26, 1929 in Lakeland, Florida to Janie Williams Murray and Edward Murray, Sr. His maternal great-grandfather was a white landowner and the namesake of Hemingway, South Carolina. He gave land to Murray's maternal grandfather. Murray's father was born in Lanes, South Carolina and attended Allen University in Columbia, South Carolina. When he married Murray's mother in 1927, they moved to Lakeland, where he worked as a principal. Murray's mother died in 1933, and Murray lived with her family in Hemingway. He remembers helping with chores on the family farm. After his father married Minnie Saunders Murray, Murray lived with him in Florida. In 1936, his father became a principal in West Palm Beach, Florida. Murray grew up during the Great Depression and in third grade worked at Afro-American Life Insurance and a white beauty salon in West Palm Beach. In high school, he held a job as a gardener and spent summers working at a hotel in Ocean City, New Jersey.

African American clergy--Interviews.

African American civic leaders--Interviews.

African American Methodists--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Cecil L. "Chip" Murray, Section A2005\_225\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:03 ?

Reverend Cecil L. "Chip" Murray encountered few white people during his childhood in South Carolina, but a run-in with a white train conductor scared him and his siblings. In West Palm Beach, Florida, Murray had a number of dedicated teachers, including Ollie McCoy, who came by his house to check on his homework. He attended Industrial High School, where he enjoyed learning history and political science. Ulysses Bradshaw Kinsey, the father of HistoryMaker Bernard Kinsey, was the principal of the school. Murray attended Payne Chapel AME Church and aspired to be a preacher. He only questioned this dream once, when he saw that many preachers were only looking for power and material wealth. Because their father was a school principal, Murray and his siblings were expected to pursue college. Murray attended Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes in Tallahassee, and upon graduation, joined the U.S. Air Force.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Cecil L. "Chip" Murray, Section A2005\_225\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:47 ?

Reverend Cecil L. "Chip" Murray was a Boy Scout while growing up in West Palm Beach, Florida. He met his wife, Bernardine Cousin Murray, when they were students at Industrial High School. In 1947, he began attending Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes in Tallahassee on a scholarship. He participated in daily chapel, joined the men's glee club, and pledged Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity. Upon graduating in 1950, Murray joined the U.S. Air Force. After narrowly escaping a burning plane, he committed to his dream of becoming a preacher, and attended Southern California School of Theology in Claremont once he was discharged in 1961. At theology school, he was the only full-time African American student. Murray was mentored by E. C. Caldwell, K. Morgan Edwards and Dr. John Cobb, and graduated in 1964. He spent three years at his first assignment in Pomona, California, where he also

chaired the local chapter of CORE, before pastoring in Kansas City, Kansas for five years.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Cecil L. "Chip" Murray, Section A2005\_225\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:52 ?

Reverend Cecil L. "Chip" Murray joined the U.S. Air Force three years after it was desegregated. His first pastoral assignment was in Pomona, California, where he built coalitions with other churches committed to civil rights. In 1966, he was assigned to Trinity African Methodist Episcopal Church in Kansas City, Kansas, where he implemented youth recreational activities. In 1971, Murray moved to Seattle, where he pastored First AME Church, the oldest African American church in the Pacific Northwest. The church secured funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to build homes for seniors and poor families. After six years, Murray was reassigned to First African Methodist Episcopal Church in Los Angeles, founded by Bridget "Biddy" Mason, a former slave. He recounts the history of the AME denomination and his community outreach efforts in Los Angeles. Murray explains why Jesus Christ was African, and describes replacing the church's images of Jesus with ones that depict him as black.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Cecil L. "Chip" Murray, Section A2005\_225\_001\_005, TRT: 0:19:56 ?

Reverend Cecil L. "Chip" Murray led Los Angeles' First African Methodist Episcopal Church in providing community programs to address issues like AIDS and substance abuse. In anticipation of the 1992 Los Angeles Riots, Murray and his congregation prepared a strategy for calming and containing the violence. Afterwards, the church helped house, feed and clothe people who had lost their homes in the fires. With funding from the Walt Disney Company, the church established a business loan program, complete with business training and mentors. Murray founded FAME Renaissance, through First African Methodist Episcopal Church, to focus on economic development. He retired as senior pastor in 2004, and began to work with the University of Southern California in Los Angeles as the John R. Tansey Chair in Christian Ethics, as a professor, and as a senior fellow at the Center for Religion and Civic Culture. He describes how he would like to be remembered and his hopes for future generations.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Cecil L. "Chip" Murray, Section A2005\_225\_002\_006, TRT: 0:31:01 ?

Reverend Cecil L. "Chip" Murray was strongly influenced by HistoryMaker James H. Cone, Malcolm X and Howard Thurman, whom he saw speak at Southern California School of Theology. Murray reflects upon Malcolm X's life and legacy as a religious leader. Murray also describes how his father, Edward Murray, Sr., influenced Murray to stand against segregation in his ministry and throughout his life. Murray shares his message for the United States and for the African American community. Murray concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.