

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with James Dumpson

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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>	Dumpson, James R., 1909-2012
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with James Dumpson,
<b>Dates:</b>	January 10, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:10:43).
<b>Abstract:</b>	City government appointee, presidential advisor, and social worker James Dumpson (1909 - 2012 ) was the first social worker to be named Commissioner of Welfare for the City of New York. He also held appointments as advisor to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, and he served on various advisory commissions, including the President's Commission on Narcotics and Drug Abuse. Dumpson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 10, 2007, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_006
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

International social worker and educator James Russelle Dumpson was born on April 5, 1909 to James and Edythe Dumpson in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Dumpson's family moved to West Philadelphia where he attended West Philadelphia Boys' High School. He then attended Chaney Normal School (now Chaney Teachers College) and received a teaching certificate in 1932. He went on to Temple University to receive his B.A. degree in education in 1934. Dumpson taught elementary school for two years before moving to New York City to work for the Children's Aid Society as a case worker. He then received his M.A. degree in social work from Fordham University and his Ph.D. from the University of Dacca in Ghana.

From 1953 to 1954, Dumpson served as a United Nations Advisor/Chief of Training in Social Welfare to the Government of Pakistan. In 1971, he worked as a consultant in Pakistan, and in 1977, received a fellowship to Pakistan through the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to Pakistan.

Dumpson began his association with Fordham University in 1957 as a Visiting Associate Professor in the Graduate Institute for Mission Studies. Ten years later, he returned to Fordham University as the Dean of the Graduate School of Social Work, with the faculty rank of professor.

In 1959, Dumpson was named Commissioner of Welfare for the City of New York, becoming the only African American welfare commissioner in the country. His appointment also marked the first time that a social worker had held the position. He then returned to New York seven years later to become administrator of the Human Resources Department.

As an advisor to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, Dumpson served on various advisory commissions, including the Presidents Commission on Narcotics and Drug Abuse. In 1990, Dumpson was appointed to serve as New York City's Health Service Administrator and Chairman of the Health and Hospitals Corporation. Upon retirement, he continued to teach at Fordham University until 2006.

Dumpson passed away on November 5, 2012.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with James Dumpson was conducted by Denise Gines on January 10, 2007, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. City government appointee, presidential advisor, and social worker James Dumpson (1909 - 2012 ) was the first social worker to be named Commissioner of Welfare for the City of New York. He also held appointments as advisor to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, and he served on various advisory commissions, including the President's Commission on Narcotics and Drug Abuse.

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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:

Dumpson, James R., 1909-2012

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Dumpson, James R., 1909-2012 --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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New York (N.Y.)

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## Occupations:

Social Worker

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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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 James Dumpson, January 10, 2007. 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 James Dumpson, Section A2007\_006\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

James Dumpson was born on April 5, 1909 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Edyth Smith Dumpson and James T. Dumpson. His maternal great-grandmother was Sarah Smith, a quiet, stately woman, whose daughter, Aldine Smith, was tenacious and forceful, and pressured her descendants to uphold the family's reputation. When she divorced Dumpson's grandfather, Edward Johnson, he moved to New York City. Dumpson's mother trained at the Philadelphia Normal School for Girls and was a public school teacher, while his father worked as a bank runner. Dumpson recalls that, although his father was the family's breadwinner, his mother was its leader. He was raised in central Philadelphia, where he frequented the Eighth Ward Settlement House, a Quaker institution; and attended the all-black Octavius V. Catto Secondary School. When Dumpson was fourteen years old, the family purchased a home in the wealthier neighborhood of West Philadelphia. There, he attended the majority white West Philadelphia High School for Boys.

Video Oral History Interview with James Dumpson, Section A2007\_006\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:01 ?

James Dumpson attended West Philadelphia High School for Boys in Pennsylvania, where he learned about African American musicians like R. Nathaniel Dett and Marian Anderson from his teacher, Reinhold Schmidt. Dumpson coached youth basketball and ran track, but later quit athletics to focus on his studies. After graduating, he enrolled at Cheyney Training School for Teachers, where his professors included Leslie Pinckney Hill and Laura Wheeler Waring. Dumpson earned his teaching certificate in 1932, and obtained a bachelor's degree at Philadelphia's Temple University in 1934, then briefly taught elementary school in Oxford, Pennsylvania. He moved to New York City to join the Children's Aid Society as a caseworker, and earned a master's degree in social work at Fordham University. After about seven years, he was hired by the city's Bureau of Child Welfare, and became the commissioner of welfare. Through his colleague Sarah Marnell, Dumpson was appointed the United Nations' social welfare consultant in Pakistan.

Video Oral History Interview with James Dumpson, Section A2007\_006\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:39 ?

James Dumpson served as the United Nations' child welfare consultant to the government of Pakistan in 1953 and 1954, and founded schools of social work in major Pakistani cities. Returning to New York City, Dumpson was hired as director of the Bureau of Child Welfare under Mayor Robert F. Wagner, Jr. He was promoted to deputy commissioner, and then commissioner of the bureau, and was the first African American in that position. Dumpson left the city government in the mid-1960s to become the dean of Hunter College's school of social work, the first African American in such a role at a majority institution. Dumpson later became dean of Fordham University's school of social service. He was active in the NAACP, and attended the March on Washington during the Civil Rights Movement. After the election of Mayor David N. Dinkins in 1990, Dumpson returned to city government as chairman of the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation. Upon retiring from the chairmanship, Dumpson continued to serve as a professor.

Video Oral History Interview with James Dumpson, Section A2007\_006\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:08 ?

James Dumpson was exempt from U.S. military service due to his work with the Children's Aid Society. Dumpson also took part in the United Nations' social

welfare programs in Thailand, Vietnam and Ghana, where he returned several times, and was granted the honorary title of nana. Dumpson's civic career included collaboration with his friend Whitney Young, executive director of the National Urban League; appointment by President John Fitzgerald Kennedy to the President's Advisory Commission on Narcotic and Drug Abuse; and work with New York City politicians like Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., David N. Dinkins, and C. Virginia Fields. Dumpson earned his Ph.D. degree in social work, and received honorary doctorates from Howard University and Tuskegee University. He married Goldie Dumpson, whom he met in the Just Us Guys and Gals club, and they had a daughter, Jeree Dumpson Wade. Dumpson reflects upon his career, values and legacy. He also describes how he would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with James Dumpson, Section A2007\_006\_001\_005, TRT: 0:12:15 ?  
James Dumpson narrates his photographs.