

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Frank Toland, Sr.

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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>	Toland, Frank, 1920-2010
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Frank Toland, Sr.,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 20, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:27:40).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Civil rights activist and history professor Frank Toland, Sr. (1920 - 2010 ) was chairman of the history department at Tuskegee University from 1968 to 1984; he was also involved in the Civil Rights Movement and was elected to Tuskegee's City Council. Toland was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 20, 2007, in Tuskegee, Alabama. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_102
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Educator and civil rights activist Frank Jefferson Toland, Sr. was born on June 1, 1920, in Helena, South Carolina, to Fred Toland and Lily Mae Sligh. The period following the Great Depression put a large strain on Toland's parents, and they eventually went their separate ways. After moving to Newberry, South Carolina, after the third grade, Toland attended Drayton Street High School and graduated as class valedictorian in 1939. After finishing a forty-two week military service beginning in 1942, Toland earned his B.A. degree in English, history, and political science from South Carolina State University.

Soon after, Toland obtained a part-time English teaching position at Wilkinson High School in South Carolina. Toland was then accepted into the University of Pennsylvania's masters program as a history major. During Toland's time at the University of Pennsylvania, he was the only African American student in the entire program. While attending the University of Pennsylvania, Toland worked for six months at William Penn Business Institute teaching English and business math. After receiving his M.A. degree in history in 1948, Toland attended the University of Minnesota and received his Ph.D.

In 1949, Toland left William Penn Business Institute and began working in the history department at the Tuskegee Institute (later Tuskegee University). It was at the Tuskegee Institute that he met his future wife, Maree N. Morse, who was a Tuskegee Institute graduate, and got acquainted with the late Booker T. Washington. The couple married on August 16, 1950, and later had three children. In 1968, Toland became the chair of the Department of History, a position he held until 1984. Also in 1968, Toland was elected unanimously as a member of the City Council of Tuskegee. Toland went on to become the head of the membership committee, the Chairman of the Political Education Committee, and one of the vice presidents of the Tuskegee Civic Association. Driven by a passion to change the racial inequality that existed in Alabama, Toland became involved in the NAACP and the Macon County Democratic Club and used his membership on the various committees as a platform to voice his opinions on race relations, especially in regards to the Voters Rights Act. Through his involvement with civil rights

issues, Toland met numerous leading activists including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Reverend Ralph Abernathy.

Frank Toland passed away on September 12, 2010.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Frank Toland, Sr. was conducted by Denise Gines on March 20, 2007, in Tuskegee, Alabama, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civil rights activist and history professor Frank Toland, Sr. (1920 - 2010 ) was chairman of the history department at Tuskegee University from 1968 to 1984; he was also involved in the Civil Rights Movement and was elected to Tuskegee's City Council.

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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:

Toland, Frank, 1920-2010

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Toland, Frank, 1920-2010 --Interviews

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African American educators--Interviews

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Universities and colleges--Faculty--Interviews

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African American civil rights workers--Interviews

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African American civic leaders--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:

History Professor

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

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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 Frank Toland, Sr., March 20, 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 Frank Toland, Sr., Section A2007\_102\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:30  
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Frank Toland, Sr. was born on June 1, 1920 in Helena, South Carolina to Lily Sligh Toland and Fred Toland. His paternal great-grandparents were enslaved, as were his maternal grandparents. Toland's maternal grandfather was threatened with castration after attempting to run away. After his first wife died, he married Toland's grandmother, the mixed race daughter of a slave owner. Although she had little education, she taught Toland's grandfather to read and write. After suffering a paralytic stroke, a white man took almost all of his property. The Ku Klux Klan once came to Toland's grandmother's house by mistake, and she warned the man they were searching for. She recognized one of the Klansmen, and launched a boycott of the store where he worked. Toland's mother worked as a domestic, and often baked or sewed for friends. His father cured tobacco in South Carolina and Tampa, Florida. In third grade, Toland's family moved to Newberry, South Carolina so he could attend Drayton Street High School.

African American educators--Interviews.

Universities and colleges--Faculty--Interviews.

African American civil rights workers--Interviews.

African American civic leaders--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Frank Toland, Sr., Section A2007\_102\_001\_002, TRT: 0:31:10  
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Frank Toland, Sr. grew up in Helena, South Carolina, where most African Americans worked on white-owned farms. While bringing lunch to his uncles in the fields, Toland and his cousins were stopped by a white woman and forced to pick blackberries. After accidentally setting fire to her crops, they avoided her home completely. When Toland was in third grade, his family moved to Newberry, South Carolina, where he attended Drayton Street High School and his mother had more opportunities for domestic work. His father was working in Tampa, Florida, and Toland's parents later separated. During the Great Depression, Toland's family received chicken feet and extra flour from local vendors, and Toland worked for five or ten cents per hour. He worked for a white woman from the North, who sometimes checked out books from the white library for him to read. When Drayton Street High School became overcrowded, the white superintendent ordered that the students raise the funds for a new building themselves.

Video Oral History Interview with Frank Toland, Sr., Section A2007\_102\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:50  
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Frank Toland, Sr. was the clerk at Bethlehem Baptist Church, but was not baptized until he was a young man. He joined the football team at Drayton Street High School, but quit after being harassed and tackled by a white spectator during a game. Toland studied bricklaying and carpentry during his first two years of high school, but became disenchanted when the class began working for the white high school for free. He was inspired by his teachers to attend college, and one even offered him a scholarship to Tuskegee Institute. However, because of the recent Scottsboro Boys trial and his history of defending himself against

whites, Toland's mother forbid him from attending. Instead he enrolled in South Carolina Agricultural and Mechanical Institute in 1939, and worked at Acacia Flower shop to pay tuition. Toland studied English, history and political science and taught at Wilkinson High School. He was later accepted to the University of Pennsylvania as the only African American graduate student in his class.

Video Oral History Interview with Frank Toland, Sr., Section A2007\_102\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:00  
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Frank Toland, Sr. was barred from registering to vote in South Carolina in 1942. That same year, he was drafted into the U.S. military, where he hoped to become an adjutant general, but instead was assigned to the infantry. While stationed at Fort Dix, he wrote to the NAACP about the discriminatory conditions on the base, where white soldiers ate with the German prisoners of war, rather than the black troops. Later, Toland earned a bachelor's degree at the Colored Normal Industrial Agricultural and Mechanical College of South Carolina, and then earned a master's degree in history at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, while also teaching at the William Penn Business Institute. In 1949, Toland was hired as a professor of history at the Tuskegee Institute. There, he researched Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver; and, in 1950, married his wife, Maree Morse Toland, whose family had been acquainted with Carver. Toland completed his Ph.D. degree at the University of Minnesota in 1954.

Video Oral History Interview with Frank Toland, Sr., Section A2007\_102\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:10  
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Frank Toland, Sr. planned to stay one year at Tuskegee Institute, but met his wife there and settled in Tuskegee, Alabama. After being threatened by a state trooper, Toland successfully ran for Tuskegee city council. He joined civic organizations like the Tuskegee Civic Association and the Macon County Democratic Club. Toland continued his membership in the NAACP, and taught a class on voter and political affairs in conjunction with the National Urban League. In Macon County, Alabama, African Americans could not register to vote without a white sponsor. Toland worked on voter registration across the South, sometimes risking travel through antagonistic areas. Because of the Tuskegee Civic Association's support of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Toland met Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who encouraged him to improve his commitment to nonviolence. After King's assassination, Toland overheard a white shop owner mock King's legacy. Toland rebuked the owner and never patronized the store again.