

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Alphonso Jackson

Overview of the Collection

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| Repository: | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com |
| Creator: | Jackson, Alphonso |
| Title: | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Alphonso Jackson, |
| Dates: | August 3, 2007 |
| Bulk Dates: | 2007 |
| Physical Description: | 6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:57:27). |
| Abstract: | Cabinet appointee The Honorable Alphonso Jackson (1945 -) served as the nation's thirteenth United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Jackson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 3, 2007, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| Identification: | A2007_225 |
| Language: | The interview and records are in English. |

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Cabinet appointee Alphonso Jackson was born on September 9, 1945 in Marshall, Texas to Henrietta and Arthur Jackson and grew up in South Dallas as one of twelve children. Jackson learned the value of education and the importance of strong work ethic from his parents. He attended both Lincoln University in 1965 and A&M Commerce in 1966 on track scholarships before receiving his B.A. degree in political science from Northeast Missouri State University in 1968. In 1973, Jackson received his J.D. degree from Washington University School of Law.

Jackson's career began in 1973 as an assistant professor at the University of Missouri, St. Louis. From 1977 through 1981, Jackson became the Director of Public Safety for the City of St. Louis, Missouri. He also served as a director of consultant services for the certified public accounting firm, Laventhol and Horwath in St. Louis. Jackson was then appointed as Executive Director of the St. Louis Housing Authority. He held this position until 1983 and became the Director of the Department of Public and Assisted Housing in Washington, D.C. in 1987. In 1989, Jackson became president and CEO of the Housing Authority of the City of Dallas, Texas. Jackson's executive title marked him as the first African American to head the agency, saving the Housing Authority from the racial discrimination law suits that had been mounting against it. During Jackson's tenure, he worked to improve the dilapidated buildings and unsafe conditions that had become standard in the city's neglected public housing units.

In 1996, Jackson left the public sector when American Electric Power-TEXAS hired him as President. There, Jackson ran the \$13 billion company for the next five years, until he was appointed as the Housing and Urban Development's Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer under the George W. Bush Administration. Working under then secretary, Mel Martinez, Jackson managed the daily operations of the \$32 billion agency and its 9,300 employees. In 2004, the U.S. Senate unanimously confirmed Jackson as the nation's thirteenth United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. This distinction marked Jackson as the third African American in

the Bush Cabinet after Secretary of State Gen. Colin Powell and Rod Paige, the Education Secretary. He resigned from this position on April 18, 2008. Since 2008, Jackson teaches at Hampton University as a professor and Director of the Center for Public Policy and Leadership. Jackson also serves on numerous national and state commissions including the General Services Commission of the State of Texas and the National Commission on America's Urban Families.

Alphonso Jackson was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 3, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Alphonso Jackson was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on August 3, 2007, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Cabinet appointee The Honorable Alphonso Jackson (1945 -) served as the nation's thirteenth United States Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

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:

Jackson, Alphonso

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Jackson, Alphonso--Interviews

African American politicians--Interviews.

African American executives--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development.

Occupations:

Cabinet Appointee

HistoryMakers® Category:

PoliticalMakers

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 The Honorable Alphonso Jackson, August 3, 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).

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 The Honorable Alphonso Jackson, Section
A2007_225_001_001, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

The Honorable Alphonso Jackson was born on September 9, 1945 in Dallas, Texas to Henrietta Green Jackson and Arthur Jackson. His paternal grandparents were from Georgia; and raised nine sons, of whom Jackson's father was the oldest, in Marshall, Texas. After Jackson's paternal grandfather died, his father worked to support his mother and brothers. Jackson's mother also grew up in Marshall, where his parents met and married. They moved to Dallas, where his mother became a midwife, and his father worked in a foundry and as a janitor and landscaper. The youngest of twelve children, Jackson's birth surprised his parents, who conceived him when they were in their late forties. He grew up in an all-black, professional neighborhood in South Dallas, and was often hospitalized due to his severe chronic asthma. At seven years old, Jackson witnessed his neighbor, Ray Butler, murdered for defending a black woman from a white policeman. Despite his testimony, the police officer was never penalized.

African American families--Texas--Dallas.

African American fathers--Texas--Dallas.

African American civil rights workers.

African American children--Social life and customs.

African American neighborhoods--Texas--Dallas.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

African American mothers--Texas--Dallas.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Alphonso Jackson, Section
A2007_225_001_002, TRT: 0:30:37 ?

The Honorable Alphonso Jackson grew up in a segregated community in South Dallas, Texas, where his neighbors included football player Duane Thomas. While a student at H.S. Thompson Elementary School, Jackson tested into the advanced class; but, due to skin color bias, was denied entry by Principal H.R. Hollins. At the encouragement of his counselor, Mr. Bell, Jackson transferred to the segregated St. Anthony Catholic School, where he was inspired by his chemistry teacher, Sister Regina. He began exercising to alleviate his asthma, and joined the track team in the seventh grade. Jackson went on to the St. Peter Academy, where he was called racial slurs by one of the nuns; and, in spite of this discrimination, excelled academically. He also became a sprinter, and defeated athlete Warren McVea at a track meet. Jackson graduated in 1963; and, per his father's advice, accepted an academic scholarship to Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. There, he ran track with the Philadelphia Pioneer Club.

African American families--Texas--Dallas.

African American neighborhoods--Texas--Dallas.

African American churches--Texas--Dallas.

Baptists.

Human skin color--Psychological aspects.

Human skin color--Social aspects.
African American athletes--History.
Catholic schools--United States.
Lincoln University (Pa.).
Truman State University--History.
African American Catholics.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Alphonso Jackson, Section
A2007_225_001_003, TRT: 0:29:35 ?

The Honorable Alphonso Jackson completed one year of study at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania; and then, when his father fell ill, transferred to East Texas State University in Commerce, Texas. There, Jackson was the first black member of the track team, and was called racial slurs by Coach Delmer Brown. He left in 1966, and enrolled for his junior year at the Northeast Missouri State Teachers College, where he was mentored by Coach Kenneth Gardner. Jackson's father passed away from cancer later that year, but encouraged him to complete his education. He graduated with a degree in political science and social sciences in 1968; and, aspiring to become a school superintendent, remained at Northeast Missouri State College to obtain a master's degree in educational administration. During that time, he served as the assistant coach of the track team. After graduating in 1969, Jackson enrolled at the Washington University School of Law in St. Louis, where he was one of ten African Americans in his class.

Truman State University--History.
African American athletes--History.
African American fathers--Texas--Dallas.
Texas. A & M University, College Station.
African American neighborhoods--Missouri--Kirkville--History--20th century.
African American college students--Social conditions.
African Americans--Education (Higher)--Missouri--Kirkville.
Washington University (Saint Louis, Mo.). School of Law.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Alphonso Jackson, Section
A2007_225_001_004, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

The Honorable Alphonso Jackson took part in the first Selma to Montgomery March in 1965; and, on Bloody Sunday, was beaten and attacked with dogs alongside John Lewis and the other activists on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Later, he joined Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. for the second march. From 1970, Jackson attended the Washington University School of Law, where he joined the Association of Black Students. There, he met Congressman William Clay, Sr., whom he recruited as an advocate for the black law students. Jackson also campaigned with Clay for the appointment of African Americans to St. Louis Mayor Alphonso J. Cervantes' administration. While in law school, Jackson met civil rights attorney Frankie Freeman, and served as her aide at the public school integration hearings in Boston. He graduated in 1973, and worked briefly for a regional office of the Internal Revenue Service. From 1974, Jackson served as a professor and assistant chancellor at the University of Missouri - St. Louis.

Civil rights movements--Alabama--Selma--History--20th century.
Washington University (Saint Louis, Mo.). School of Law.
King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968.

Political participation.

Violence--Alabama--Selma--History--20th century.

Selma to Montgomery Rights March (1965 : Selma, Ala.).

African American civil rights workers.

African American students.

United States--Internal Revenue Service.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Alphonso Jackson, Section
A2007_225_001_005, TRT: 0:29:38 ?

The Honorable Alphonso Jackson served as a campaign manager for Missouri state legislator J.B. "Jet" Banks in 1974; and, in 1976, organized John Danforth's campaign for the U.S. Senate. Following James F. Conway's mayoral election in St. Louis, Missouri, Jackson was appointed as the youngest public safety director of a major city at the age of twenty-nine years old. In 1981, he became the deputy director of the St. Louis Housing Authority under Conway's successor, Mayor Vincent C. Schoemehl. In 1983, Jackson ran unsuccessfully for comptroller of the City of St. Louis, and then joined the accounting firm of Lavenhol and Horwath. He was hired in 1987 by Samuel R. Pierce, Jr. to direct the District of Columbia Department of Public and Assisted Housing under Mayor Marion Barry. In 1989, Jackson was recruited by Dallas Mayor Annette Greenfield Strauss as the director of the Dallas Housing Authority. There, he led the initiative to integrate public housing, and remained as director until 1996.

Public housing--Missouri--Saint Louis.

African American businesspeople.

African American mayors.

Barry, Marion, 1936-.

Lavenhol & Horwath--History.

Housing authorities--Washington (D.C.).

Dallas (Tex.). Housing Dept.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Alphonso Jackson, Section
A2007_225_001_006, TRT: 0:27:27 ?

The Honorable Alphonso Jackson served as the director of the Dallas Housing Authority from 1989 to 1996. In this role, he led the community initiative for integrated public housing, despite protests by organizations like Not in My Back Yard. Jackson became the second African American member of the Dallas Citizens Council, and was appointed to the State Purchasing and General Services Commission. He also joined the boards of the YMCA and the Boy Scouts of America, and helped integrate the scout troops of Texas. He was recruited as the vice president of Central and South West Corporation's international division, and was later promoted to the regional presidency. In 2001, President George Walker Bush invited Jackson to serve as the deputy secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, where he was promoted to secretary in 2004. Jackson describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community; and reflects upon his life, legacy and the future of public housing.

African American executives.

African American politicians.

Bush, George W. (George Walker), 1946-.

HOPE VI (Program).

Housing authorities--Washington (D.C.).

Public housing--Texas--Dallas.