

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Jack Arnett Kirkland

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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>	Kirkland, Jack A.
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Jack Arnett Kirkland,
<b>Dates:</b>	December 6, 2007 and October 15, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	9 Betacame SP videocassettes (4:09:40).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Professor Jack Arnett Kirkland (1931 - ) founded the Economic Development Concentration at Washington University's School of Social Work after serving in public service as the State of Missouri's Director of Transportation. Kirkland consulted on issues of racial, ethnic, and cultural sensitivity for a variety of school districts, corporations, and government agencies nationwide. Kirkland was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 6, 2007 and October 15, 2007, in St. Louis, Missouri. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_288
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Professor Jack Arnett Kirkland was born on October 28, 1931 in Blythedale, Pennsylvania. He attended Syracuse University, where he was a member of the Phi Delta Kappa Honor Society, and received his B.A. degree in international relations in 1959, and his M.S. degree in social services.

In 1964, Kirkland became chair of St. Louis University's Social Group Work Program. During this period, Kirkland also directed the Peace Corps training in Latin America for community development until 1967. In 1970, Kirkland became an associate professor at Washington University at St. Louis' George Warren Brown School of Social Work. Kirkland also served as the Jeff-Vander-Lou Development Corporation's director of economic development. Kirkland co-founded the Black Studies Department (now African American Studies) at Washington University in 1974, and served as department chair. In 1976, he was appointed Missouri's director of transportation and served as a member of the governor's cabinet for two years. In 1980, Kirkland was the first chair and founder of the Social and Economic Development Concentration at Washington University, and served for ten years. He also worked as program director and executive director of Settlement Houses in the East and Midwest. Additionally, he worked as a consultant to mayors of several cities. Kirkland provided consultation for five years with the Department of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C., for American Indian Nations in the Southwest.

Kirkland testified as an expert witness for five Congressional Committees and joined the National Association of Child Care Workers' meeting in Capetown, South Africa, in 1995, meeting with Desmond Tutu and speaking publicly in both Port Elizabeth and Mmabatho, South Africa. In 2010, he was appointed to the executive board of the St. Louis County Economic Council and to the Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority for St. Louis County, and served as a member for International Trade Mission to Indonesia in 2012. He also served as a member of the Mission of the Niagara Foundation for Cultural Exchange to Turkey, for Missouri State Legislators, in 2012,

and again, on an International Trade Mission to China in 2012. He also serves as the Social Economic Developer of “The Healing Village” in East St. Louis.

In 1975, Kirkland was voted Most Outstanding Teacher of the Year for Washington University. In 1988, Kirkland received a Most Outstanding Teacher Award for the college’s Brown School of Social Work, receiving the award a second time in 1995. In 1990, he was featured in the *St. Louis Sun’s* Great Teachers Series. He is the recipient of the 1996 National Service Award from the National Association of Homes and Services for Children and a 1997 Spirit of Crazy Horse award from the Black Hills Seminars on Reclaiming Youth at Risk. In 2000, he was inducted into the City of McKeesport, Pennsylvania High School Hall of Fame. He was awarded the Distinguished Faculty Alumni Award in 2010.

Kirkland and his wife, Iris McWherter Kirkland, have three children, Jack, Jr., Adrienne, and Kelly.

Jack Arnett Kirkland was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on October 15, 2007.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Jack Arnett Kirkland was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 6, 2007 and October 15, 2007, in St. Louis, Missouri, and was recorded on 9 Betacame SP videocassettes. Professor Jack Arnett Kirkland (1931 - ) founded the Economic Development Concentration at Washington University’s School of Social Work after serving in public service as the State of Missouri’s Director of Transportation. Kirkland consulted on issues of racial, ethnic, and cultural sensitivity for a variety of school districts, corporations, and government agencies nationwide.

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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:

Kirkland, Jack A.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Kirkland, Jack A.--Interviews

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African American educators--Missouri--Saint Louis--Interviews

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Washington University (Saint Louis, Mo.)--Faculty--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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Washington University (Saint Louis, Mo.)

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## Occupations:

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 Jack Arnett Kirkland, December 6, 2007 and October 15, 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 Jack Arnett Kirkland, Section A2007\_288\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

Jack Arnett Kirkland was born on October 28, 1931 in Blythedale, Pennsylvania to Anna Marshall Kirkland and Edward Kirkland. His maternal grandfather was a farmer and cook, and raised Kirkland's mother in Birmingham, Alabama. Kirkland's father, born in 1898, also lived in Birmingham, where he was educated through the third grade. As adults, Kirkland's parents decided to raise their family outside of the South, to escape the lynchings that were common in Alabama. His father became a coal miner, and the couple followed the mining trail through the Appalachian Mountains. They first settled in Cokeburg, Pennsylvania, where Kirkland's mother operated a successful boarding house and restaurant catering to the mining workers. The family later moved to Blythedale, where Kirkland was the youngest of ten siblings. His mother unofficially adopted three more children from the community, and grew a large garden to provide canned food to needy families during the winters.

African American educators--Missouri--Saint Louis--Interviews.

Washington University (Saint Louis, Mo.)--Faculty--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Jack Arnett Kirkland, Section A2007\_288\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Jack Arnett Kirkland grew up in an African American neighborhood in Blythedale, Pennsylvania, where his parents rented a home from his father's employer, the Warden Mine company. His neighborhood was bounded by the Youghiogheny River, which flooded each year; and the train tracks, which Kirkland crossed each day on his route to P.S. 11. There, his teachers were all white, but treated the students well regardless of race. Kirkland was influenced by his neighbor, Julius Richardson, who joined the U.S. Army and found success outside of Blythedale. Kirkland also admired Johnny Waters, a miner with a golfing talent, and often caddied for him. However, Kirkland became disillusioned with the sport because of the discrimination against African Americans at the local golf course. Other community members spent their free time gambling and dancing at one of the small town's five juke joints. Kirkland belonged to the congregation of Blythedale's Ebenezer Baptist Church, and recalls a deacon's warning not to steal.

Video Oral History Interview with Jack Arnett Kirkland, Section A2007\_288\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Jack Arnett Kirkland's father worked as a miner in Blythedale, Pennsylvania,

where he was underpaid and overworked, despite belonging to a union. As a child, Kirkland often hopped trains to nearby towns, and swam in the Youghiogheny River. Blythedale had no high school, so Kirkland was bused to McKeesport Technical High School in McKeesport, Pennsylvania. He excelled in his studies, but did not consider attending college; and, upon graduating in 1950, joined the U.S. Air Force. Kirkland met his first wife while stationed at the Craig Air Force Base in Alabama, and was then assigned to Newfoundland and Labrador in Canada for eighteen months, where he was promoted to sergeant. Kirkland experienced discrimination in the U.S. military, but chose to reenlist because jobs were scarce. During his second tour, Kirkland was stationed at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. After delisting, he studied international relations for three years at the University of Maryland's satellite campus in England.

Video Oral History Interview with Jack Arnett Kirkland, Section A2007\_288\_001\_004, TRT: 0:31:20 ?

Jack Arnett Kirkland lived for a time in Liverpool, England, and then enrolled at Syracuse University in Syracuse, New York, where he studied international relations. Kirkland aspired to work for the U.S. Department of State; but, upon graduating, obtained a position at Syracuse's Huntington Family Centers, where he became committed to social work. Kirkland returned to Syracuse University to earn a master's degree, and became the first African American graduate of its School of Social Work. During this time, he was inspired by the welfare rights movement, and the struggle against urban renewal in Syracuse. After graduating, Kirkland was hired as a program director at Saint Louis University in St. Louis, Missouri, where he taught group communication skills. He also directed the Peace Corps' community development program in St. Louis during the 1960s. Kirkland talks about programs like Model Cities, which he considered ineffective due to a lack of community control.

Video Oral History Interview with Jack Arnett Kirkland, Section A2007\_288\_001\_005, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Jack Arnett Kirkland served as the director of the Plymouth House, a settlement house in St. Louis, Missouri. He also taught group communications at Saint Louis University, and trained volunteers as the director of the Peace Corps' community development program. In this role, Kirkland fostered a relationship with the Pruitt-Igoe housing project, where volunteers implemented their community development training. When Pruitt-Igoe was demolished in 1972, the former residents were given Section 8 housing vouchers, and the community was dispersed. Kirkland describes a similar example of displacement in the community of East St. Louis, Illinois. When land became available there, it was not bought by the local black churches, as Kirkland recommended. Instead, it was purchased by wealthy developers from outside the community, and the town became increasingly white. In St. Louis, Kirkland gave presentations about his research into such demographic shifts. He also talks about the importance of African American studies.

Video Oral History Interview with Jack Arnett Kirkland, Section A2007\_288\_002\_006, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Jack Arnett Kirkland resigned his post at Saint Louis University in St. Louis, Missouri, and began a speaking tour. He soon met Professor Robert L. Williams, a psychologist, who was developing a black studies program at Washington University in St. Louis. At the time, student protesters were demanding the creation of such programs at universities across the United States. Kirkland accepted Williams' invitation to join the project, and began researching African

American history and culture. Kirkland recalls how, early in his research, he was surprised to learn about African explorers like the Carthaginians, and civilizations like the Mali, Songhai and Ghana empires. He describes the exclusion of African and African American accomplishments from conventional history textbooks, which perpetuated negative stereotypes about the black community. Kirkland also talks about the failings of the Black History Month program, which rarely included examinations to ensure that students mastered the content.

Video Oral History Interview with Jack Arnett Kirkland, Section A2007\_288\_002\_007, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Jack Arnett Kirkland and Robert L. Williams founded the black studies program at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. Initially, the program lacked departmental status, and employed only seven faculty, who were not eligible for tenure. In the early 1970s, Kirkland petitioned to admit more black students to the university, and mentored them to ensure their success. In 1974, Kirkland was appointed to serve as the chairman of the newly formed black studies department. He was also among the first African American tenured faculty at the Washington University School of Social Work. Then, after managing J.B. Banks' senate campaign in 1976, Kirkland was named the director of transportation by Missouri Governor Joseph P. Teasdale. He was the first African American confirmed by the Missouri State Senate, and hired numerous African American staffers during his eighteen-month tenure. In 1977, Kirkland returned to Washington University in St. Louis as the chairman of economic development.

Video Oral History Interview with Jack Arnett Kirkland, Section A2007\_288\_002\_008, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Jack Arnett Kirkland founded the economic development program at Washington University in St. Louis, and served as its first chairman. He also worked with the Neighborhood Counsel in St. Louis, Missouri, where he observed the displacement of low-income residents from the city center, and the role of transportation in this process. He recalls how the rising cost of gasoline prompted wealthy residents to move into St. Louis, and forced working class African Americans to move to suburbs like Chesterfield, Missouri. Additionally, Kirkland talks about the history of African American landownership from the 19th century. At the time of the interview, he owned a large parcel of land in East St. Louis, Illinois, and planned to establish a community there. He was also working on an economic development training program for African American ministers. Kirkland reflects upon his hopes and concerns for the African American community, as well as his life, legacy and family.

Video Oral History Interview with Jack Arnett Kirkland, Section A2007\_288\_002\_009, TRT: 0:14:00 ?

Jack Arnett Kirkland describes how he would like to be remembered, and concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.