

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ralph Bernard Everett

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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>	Everett, Ralph Bernard, 1951-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Bernard Everett,
<b>Dates:</b>	February 1, 2008 and February 20, 2023
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2008 and 2023
<b>Physical Description:</b>	11 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (5:05:44).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Nonprofit chief executive, administrative lawyer, and presidential advisor Ralph Bernard Everett (1951 - ) was the President and CEO of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies in Washington, D.C. He served as lead counsel to the U.S. Senate commerce committee, and as a parliamentarian at the 1992 Democratic National Convention in New York City. Everett was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 1, 2008 and February 20, 2023, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2008_006
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Lawyer and political advisor Ralph Bernard Everett was born on June 23, 1951 in Orangeburg, South Carolina. He graduated from Morehouse College in 1973 with honors from the Phi Beta Kappa Society and went on to attend Duke Law School, where he received his J.D. degree in 1976 and was an Earl Warren Legal Scholar.

Everett then went to work as a lawyer for the North Carolina Department of Labor in Raleigh, North Carolina. He was appointed as the Democratic staff director and minority chief counsel to the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation in 1982, becoming the first African American to lead a Senate committee; he later became Chief Counsel and Staff Director of the full Committee. Everett achieved another “first” when he became the first African American to be named partner at the law firm of Paul, Hastings, Janofsky & Walker in 1989.

Everett has advised several U.S. presidential campaigns, including Democratic candidates Ernest Hollings and Michael Dukakis. His political involvement continued when Everett served as the Senate Liaison to the Clinton-Gore Presidential Campaign in 1992 when Clinton defeated incumbent President George H.W. Bush. A devotee of the Democratic Party, Everett served as parliamentarian for the 1992 Democratic National Convention. With experience in telecommunications and policymaking, Everett served as the U.S. Ambassador for the 1998 International Telecommunication Union’s Plenipotentiary Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In 2007, Everett succeeded Togo D. West, Jr. as President and CEO of the Washington, D.C. based Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

Everett has served on the boards of numerous community organizations, including the National Urban League, the Center for National Policy, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Cumulus Media, Inc., Shenandoah Life Insurance

Company, and his church, Alfred Street Baptist Church, which is the oldest African American congregation in the City of Alexandria, Virginia.

Everett resides in Alexandria with his wife, Dr. Gwendolyn Harris Everett, and they have one adult son, Jason Gordon Everett.

Everett was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 1, 2008.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Ralph Bernard Everett was conducted by Cheryl Butler and Larry Crowe on February 1, 2008 and February 20, 2023, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 11 Betacam SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. Nonprofit chief executive, administrative lawyer, and presidential advisor Ralph Bernard Everett (1951 - ) was the President and CEO of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies in Washington, D.C. He served as lead counsel to the U.S. Senate commerce committee, and as a parliamentarian at the 1992 Democratic National Convention in New York City.

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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:

Everett, Ralph Bernard, 1951-

Butler, Cheryl (Interviewer)

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Everett, Ralph Bernard, 1951- --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:

Lawyer

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers

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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 Ralph Bernard Everett, February 1, 2008 and February 20, 2023. 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.

# Detailed Description of the Collection

## Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Bernard Everett, Section A2008\_006\_002\_008, TRT: 8:29:32 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Bernard Everett, Section A2008\_006\_002\_009, TRT: 9:29:56 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Bernard Everett, Section A2008\_006\_002\_010, TRT: 10:29:41 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Bernard Everett, Section A2008\_006\_002\_011, TRT: 11:07:48 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Bernard Everett, Section B2008\_006\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:51 ?

Ralph Bernard Everett was born on June 23, 1951 in Orangeburg, South Carolina to Alethia Hilton Everett and Francis G.S. Everett, Jr. His paternal grandfather, Minister Francis G.S. Everett, Sr., served as the president of the Florida Memorial College and Guadalupe College in Seguin, Texas; and married Susie Wright Everett, a graduate of Orangeburg's South Carolina Agricultural and Mechanical Institute, who worked for a time as a domestic in New York before becoming a seamstress. They had six children, including Everett's father, who was born in Florida in 1925. Everett's maternal grandparents, Mary Robinson Hilton and turkey farmer William Hilton, raised a large family in Alcolu, South Carolina, where Everett's mother was born in 1926. After marrying, Everett's parents moved to a segregated neighborhood near the highway in Elloree, South Carolina. There, his father was the pastor of a Baptist church and the principal of the Elloree Training School, where Everett began his education.

Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Bernard Everett, Section B2008\_006\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:53 ?

Ralph Bernard Everett grew up in segregated Elloree, South Carolina, which was located near Orangeburg, South Carolina. He considered becoming one of the first black students at Orangeburg High School, but decided instead to attend Orangeburg's all-black Wilkinson High School. There, he played the alto saxophone, served as editor of the yearbook and participated in the Spanish club and honor society. In 1969, he matriculated at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, under the influence of distinguished alumni like Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. and historian Lerone Bennett. At this point in the interview, Everett talks about his early experiences of racial discrimination and the Orangeburg massacre of 1968, in which over thirty black college students were shot by state patrolmen for attempting to integrate a bowling alley. He recalls the mass meetings organized by the NAACP at Orangeburg's Trinity United Methodist Church, and local civil rights leaders like I. DeQuincey Newman and Gloria Rackley Blackwell.

Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Bernard Everett, Section B2008\_006\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:53 ?

Ralph Bernard Everett enrolled in 1969 at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, during the administration of President Hugh Gloster. He joined the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, and attended mandatory chapel services, where the

speakers included Reverend Dr. Joseph Lowery, Reverend Jesse L. Jackson and Ralph Abernathy. Everett and his peers were required to study African American history, including the works of Carter G. Woodson and John Howard Griffin. He also took courses at the Atlanta University Center's other historically black institutions. In addition, Everett describes the political activism on the Morehouse College campus during the early 1970s, and remembers Samuel L. Jackson and Reverend Dr. Calvin O. Butts, who were students at the time. Upon graduating in 1973, Everett decided to pursue a career in law, despite his paternal family's legacy in the ministry. He matriculated at the majority-white Duke University School of Law, where he was active with the Black American Law Students Association.

Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Bernard Everett, Section B2008\_006\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:45 ?

Ralph Bernard Everett enrolled in 1973 at the Duke University School of Law in Durham, North Carolina. There, his African American classmates included future civil rights attorney Barbara R. Arnwine, and Johnnie Mask and Lonzy Edwards, who went on to careers in the judiciary. Upon graduating, Everett joined the North Carolina Department of Labor, where he prosecuted violations of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's standards. Then, he was recruited to join the office of U.S. Senator Ernest Hollings from South Carolina. At this point in the interview, Everett describes Senator Hollings' political career, including his role in the peaceful integration of the Clemson Agricultural College of South Carolina in Clemson, South Carolina. Everett went on to serve as the chief counsel to the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation during the 1980s. He also remembers the Watergate scandal of 1973, and its impact at Duke University, where President Richard Nixon was an alumnus.

Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Bernard Everett, Section B2008\_006\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:33 ?

Ralph Bernard Everett was appointed by Senator Ernest Hollings as the chief counsel to the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation in 1982. In this role, Everett set the daily agenda for the committee, whose members included U.S. Senators John Danforth, Al Gore and Nancy Landon Kassebaum. He also met regularly with a group of African American staffers, and befriended his colleague, Thurgood Marshall, Jr. In 1984, Everett worked on Hollings' campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination. He went on to assist with the investigation of the Challenger space shuttle explosion of 1986, which resulted in the deaths of seven astronauts, including teacher Christa McAuliffe. In 1989, Everett left the commerce committee, and became the first African American attorney at the law firm of Paul, Hastings, Janofsky and Walker LLP. He describes his farewell party at the U.S. Senate, including the speeches given by Senator Hollings and Senator Strom Thurmond.

Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Bernard Everett, Section B2008\_006\_001\_006, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Ralph Bernard Everett joined the law firm of Paul, Hastings, Janofsky and Walker LLC in 1989. He focused on transportation and communications, and his clients included the Bell Atlantic Corporation and Norfolk Southern Corporation. In 1992, he worked on Bill Clinton's presidential campaign, and served as a parliamentarian at the Democratic National Convention in New York City. Six years later, Everett became an ambassador to the Plenipotentiary Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota, which prompted his travels to

Johannesburg, South Africa, where he spoke about issues in telemedicine, and met South African President Nelson Mandela. At this point in the interview, Everett remembers the mentorship of Vernon E. Jordan, Jr. and Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown. He also talks about U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, and the leaders of the Federal Communications Commission. In 2006, Everett became the president of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies in Washington, D.C.

Video Oral History Interview with Ralph Bernard Everett, Section B2008\_006\_001\_007, TRT: 0:30:12 ?

Ralph Bernard Everett left the law firm of Paul, Hastings, Janofsky and Walker LLC to serve as the president and CEO of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a think tank in Washington, D.C. The center addressed issues facing the African American community in areas like health policy, political participation and media. At the time of the interview, Everett was working to broaden the center's policy reach through the creation of institutes like the Civic Engagement and Governance Institute. In addition, Everett reflects upon his life, legacy and the importance of family. With his wife, art historian Gwendolyn Harris Everett, he had one son, Jason Everett. Everett's son graduated from Duke University and the William and Mary Law School, and went on to serve as a legislative assistant under Congressman Mel Watt in the U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary. Everett shares his advice to young people, and concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.