

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lawrence Carter

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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>	Carter, Lawrence Edward, 1941-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Lawrence Carter,
<b>Dates:</b>	April 18, 2011 and July 15, 2010
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2010 and 2011
<b>Physical Description:</b>	11 uncompressed MOV digital video files (5:23:27).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Religion professor and chapel dean Lawrence Carter (1941 - ) was a professor and chapel dean at Morehouse College, and worked to promote and preserve the legacy of civil rights leaders around the world. Carter was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 18, 2011 and July 15, 2010, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2010_080
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Chapel Dean and religion professor Lawrence Carter was born in Georgia to John and Bernice Carter and grew up in Ohio. He received his B.A. degree from Virginia University of Lynchburg and his M. Div., S.T.M., and Ph.D. degrees from Boston University. After his graduation he served as Baptist Counselor, Residential Counselor, and Executive Director of the Martin Luther King Jr. Afro American Cultural Center, and as Associate Dean of Daniel L. Marsh Chapel at Boston University. He went on to teach at Harvard University Divinity School and serve as coordinator of African American studies at Simmons College.

Carter eventually became a tenured professor at Morehouse College, a college that Martin Luther King Jr. had tried to recruit him for years earlier. In 1979, Carter became the first Dean of the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel and college curator. In the same year, Carter also founded the Martin Luther King Jr. Chapel Assistants Pre-seminarians Program at Morehouse. In 1982, he began lecturing at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta.

Carter was responsible for choosing and researching the site for the new edifice for Ebenezer Baptist Church, a church that both Martin Luther King Jr. and his father preached at. Carter has published several books, including *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor to Martin Luther King Jr.* and *Global Ethical Options, in the Tradition of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Daisaku Ikeda*. He also commissioned the Gandhi Ikeda King Hassan Institute for Ethics and Reconciliation in 1999, and created the Gandhi-King-Ikeda Community Builder's Prize of the Morehouse Chapel in 2001. Carter is an advocate of the work of Doctor Daisaku Ikeda, president of the lay Buddhist organization Soka Gakki International, and has done much to publicize Ikeda's work in the U.S., including helping to create a traveling museum exhibit on the life and work of Gandhi, King, and Ikeda.

Carter has received four honorary degrees from Lincoln University, Al al-Bayt University, and Soka University of

Japan. He has been elected delegate to numerous international religious conventions, among them the Second and Third Synthesis Dialogues in Italy. He has also been given many awards, such as the Seikyo Award for Highest Honor and the Trumpet Award for Spirituality. Carter has been a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellow twice, a Fulbright-Hayes Scholar, and has been voted a member of the Class of Leadership Atlanta. Lawrence Carter was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 15, 2010.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Lawrence Carter was conducted by Denise Gines on April 18, 2011 and July 15, 2010, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 11 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Religion professor and chapel dean Lawrence Carter (1941 - ) was a professor and chapel dean at Morehouse College, and worked to promote and preserve the legacy of civil rights leaders around the world.

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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:

Carter, Lawrence Edward, 1941-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Carter, Lawrence Edward, 1941- --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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Morehouse College

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## Occupations:

Chapel Dean

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

ReligionMakers

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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 Lawrence Carter, April 18, 2011 and July 15, 2010.  
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 Lawrence Carter, Section A2010\_080\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:25 ?

Lawrence Carter was born on September 23, 1941 in Dawson, Georgia to Bernice Childs Johnson and John Carter III. His father was also born in Dawson, and served in the U.S. military during World War II. After returning from duty, he suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder, and lived at the Chillicothe Veterans Hospital in Ohio for the remainder of his life. Carter's mother was also born in Dawson. She obtained an eleventh grade education, and struggled to find work in the segregated South. Carter spent his early years with his maternal grandmother, Willie Mae Roberts Mullins, while his mother searched for better work opportunities in Columbus, Ohio. Carter's grandmother was an active member of Dawson's First Shiloh Baptist Church, where Carter was given the responsibility of ringing the church bell at three years old. When Carter's grandmother died in 1946, his maternal aunt, Eddie Childs Mays, escorted him to Columbus to live with his mother. Carter also remembers the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Video Oral History Interview with Lawrence Carter, Section A2010\_080\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Lawrence Carter's father, John Carter III, aspired to become a preacher like his father and grandfather, John Carter Jr. and John Carter, Sr. However, the lingering effects of posttraumatic stress disorder prevented him from realizing his dream. Carter grew up in Dawson, Georgia with his maternal grandmother, Willie Mae Roberts Mullins, and periodically visited his mother in Columbus, Ohio. After his grandmother's death in 1946, Carter and his maternal aunt, Eddie Childs Mays, traveled by train to join his mother in Columbus. On the way, Carter fell ill, and they stopped in Atlanta, Georgia, where they lived with a cousin named Queen Goar for a month until his health improved. In Columbus, Carter's mother worked multiple jobs to provide for him. He began his education at Garfield Elementary School under the leadership of Principal Charles P. Blackburn. In the first grade, Carter missed the first half of the school year due to a series of illness, which hindered his reading abilities.

Video Oral History Interview with Lawrence Carter, Section A2010\_080\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:38 ?

Lawrence Carter attended Garfield Elementary School in Columbus, Ohio, where he was required to repeat the fifth grade due to his inability to read. With the help of a sympathetic teacher, Carter learned to read after school, and became an enthusiastic student with a particular interest in science and English. Carter and his mother moved from the East Side of Columbus to the predominantly black Hilltop neighborhood, where he attended Highland Elementary School. He struggled to adjust to this new environment, and was often bullied by the local children. For work, Carter's mother oiled the wheels of locomotives, and cleaned at Grant Hospital and North Hospital. She also worked in the dining section of the Lazarus department store. Although he was an average student, Carter was president of science club and the Victorious Christian Youth group at West Junior and Senior High School. He was determined to speak at his high school commencement, but was not chosen because his teacher doubted his writing abilities.

Video Oral History Interview with Lawrence Carter, Section A2010\_080\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:34 ?

Lawrence Carter initially lived on the East Side of Columbus, Ohio, where he belonged to Hebrew Missionary Baptist Church, and attended Vacation Bible School at Shiloh Baptist Church. After moving to the Hilltop neighborhood, he

joined the congregation at Oakley Full Gospel Baptist Church. There, he had a close relationship with the head pastor, Jacob Ashburn, Jr., who baptized him in 1954. Carter tried to attend Vacation Bible School at an all-white United Methodist Church, but was rejected. As a student at Columbus' West Junior and Senior High School, Carter served as a bailiff in the student court. In his senior year, he became a licensed preacher at his church. Carter enrolled at Virginia Theological Seminary and College in Lynchburg, Virginia. While there, Carter met Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who unsuccessfully tried to persuade him to transfer to Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. At this point, Carter recalls integrating the audience at a minstrel show in Dawson, Georgia.

Video Oral History Interview with Lawrence Carter, Section A2010\_080\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Lawrence Carter delivered newspapers and reset pins at a bowling alley during his teenage years in Columbus, Ohio. Later, he became a camp counselor at Camp Wheeler in Chesterville, Ohio, where he was in charge of a cabin of five campers. At first, the children undermined his authority, but he soon gained their respect. Carter joined the Un-American Activities club at the integrated West Junior and Senior High School in Columbus, Ohio. Upon graduation, his class planned a swimming party at the white pool near the school, but they were turned away. In 1961, Carter entered Virginia Theological Seminary and College, where he attended chapel every day and heard speakers like William A. Jones. Inspired by Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s The American Dream speech, he aspired to study at the Boston University School of Theology. He received early admission, and enrolled after completing his undergraduate degree. At this point, Carter explains the difference between ordained and licensed ministry.

Video Oral History Interview with Lawrence Carter, Section A2010\_080\_001\_006, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Lawrence Carter was a member of his high school's Un-American Activities club. He went on to attend Virginia Seminary and College in Lynchburg, Virginia, where he protested against the Vietnam War at Court Street Baptist Church with his professor, Virgil A. Wood. During the summers, he worked as a counselor and director at Camp Wheeler in Chesterville, Ohio and Camp Mary Orton in Columbus, Ohio. Carter's pastor, Jacob Julian Ashburn, served as the commencement speaker at his graduation in 1964. That summer, he vacationed with a friend on Huckleberry Island in Canada. With a clergy exemption from the Vietnam War, Carter was able to enter Boston University School of Theology in the fall of 1964. While there, he met his future wife, Marva Griffin Carter, on a blind date. At this point in the interview, Carter remembers the influence of Reverend Otis Maxfield, and the deaths of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Pope John XXIII and Robert F. Kennedy in the 1960s.

Video Oral History Interview with Lawrence Carter, Section A2010\_080\_001\_007, TRT: 0:15:01 ?

Lawrence Carter narrates his photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Lawrence Carter, Section A2010\_080\_002\_008, TRT: 8:35:46 ?

Lawrence Carter was officially ordained in 1968 by Victor Scalise at the Baptist Church in Brookline, Massachusetts. The following year, he married Marva Griffin Carter. He pledged to a graduate chapter of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity at Boston University School of Theology. From 1976, Carter served as a professor and clergy teaching advisor at Harvard University. He also coordinated the African American studies program at Simmons College. In 1979, Carter became the dean of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Chapel at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. In this role, he established the Martin Luther King, Jr. Chapel Assistants Pre-seminarians Program, and mentored

students like Otis Moss III and Raphael G. Warnock. He also developed a close relationship with the King family, including Coretta Scott King, Christine King Farris, Alberta Williams King and Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr. Carter remembers joining the Masons in Atlanta, and talks about the Atlanta Missing and Murdered Children cases of 1979.

Video Oral History Interview with Lawrence Carter, Section A2010\_080\_002\_009, TRT: 9:31:10 ?

Lawrence Carter served as the dean of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Chapel in Atlanta, Georgia. In this capacity, he became acquainted with Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson, and met Nelson Mandela during his tour of Morehouse College. At this point in the interview, Carter remembers the retirement of President Hugh Gloster, and the memorial service for Bill Cosby's son, Ennis Cosby. Carter participated in the Leadership Atlanta program in 1986, and served as a delegate at the eleventh Baptist Youth World Conference in Glasgow, Scotland in 1988. Under the leadership of Morehouse College President Leroy Keith, Jr., Carter published 'Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays Mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.' and 'Global Ethical Options in the Tradition of Gandhi, King, and Ikeda' with George David Miller and N Radhakrishnan. Carter received a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1993. The next year, he entered the Fulbright-Hays Program, where he studied Brazilian culture and religion.

Video Oral History Interview with Lawrence Carter, Section A2010\_080\_002\_010, TRT: 10:29:57 ?

Lawrence Carter collaborated with Mayor Andrew Young to host the Senegalese scholar Cheikh Anta Diop in Atlanta, Georgia in 1985. In 1996, he headed the initiative to reinter Sadie Mays and Benjamin Mays on the Morehouse College campus. Under Reverend Dr. Joseph L. Roberts, Carter served on the committee to construct a new edifice for Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church, which was completed in 1999. In celebration of Benjamin Mays' 100th birthday, Carter edited the book 'Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays Mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr.' In 1999, he partnered with Soka Gakkai International to found the Gandhi, King, Ikeda Institute for Global Ethics and Reconciliation at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Chapel. Carter awarded the first Gandhi, King, Ikeda Community Builders Prize to Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan. At this point, Carter describes his Ph.D. dissertation, and talks about his peace work after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Video Oral History Interview with Lawrence Carter, Section A2010\_080\_002\_011, TRT: 11:37:16 ?

Lawrence Carter delivered the inaugural address at Soka University of America in Aliso Viejo, California in 2001. At this point, he talks about the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Carter served on the governing board of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, and attended the Parliament of the World's Religions in Barcelona, Spain. His interactions with the delegates there inspired him to create the Interfaith Resurrection Assembly. For his work at the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel, Carter received the Trumpet Award and honors from Soka Gakkai International and Morehouse College. He was married to Marva Griffin Carter, who was an educator at the Georgia State University School of Music. Together, they had one son, Lawrence Carter, Jr. Carter shares his message to future generations, and his views on mega churches. He also describes his plans for the future, and reflects upon his legacy and how he would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Lawrence Carter, Section A2010\_080\_Carter\_Lawrence\_06\_MED\_001, TRT:

