

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Clarence Williamson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Williamson, Clarence Bernard, 1930-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Clarence Williamson,
Dates:	August 9, 2000
Bulk Dates:	2000
Physical Description:	3 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:14:51).
Abstract:	State representative The Honorable Clarence Williamson (1930 -) served in the Illinois House of Representatives, and has held positions with New York Life Insurance and the Cook County Department of Probation. Williamson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 9, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2000_064
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Clarence Bernard Williamson was born on June 1, 1930 in Chicago, Illinois to Robert and Anne Williamson. He spent much of his childhood working behind the counter of his father's grocery store. Williamson graduated from St. Elizabeth High School and enrolled at Roosevelt University. At the age of twenty-one, Williamson married Marion Degraffinreed, and continued to work in his father's store until he was hired to manage a store owned by prominent Congressman William Dawson. Williamson dabbled in local politics, serving as a precinct captain for Alderman Robert Miller's 6th Ward. In 1966, Williamson found employment as an underwriter for New York Life Insurance. After a few years, Williamson returned to college, earning an advanced degree in Corrections while working for the Cook County Department of Probation.

In 1980, Williamson was appointed to the Illinois House of Representatives, filling a vacancy left by Eugene Barnes after his appointment to the Chicago Transit Authority. Williamson decided to run for another term, but was defeated. Williamson continues to work in the insurance field, acting as President of Vital Associates Incorporated, an insurance firm. The father of one son, Clarence Jr., Williamson has been a member of several organizations, including Operation PUSH, the American Correctional Association and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

Williams was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 9, 2000.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Clarence Williamson was conducted by Adele Hodge on August 9, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 3 Betacame SP videocassettes. State representative The

Honorable Clarence Williamson (1930 -) served in the Illinois House of Representatives, and has held positions with New York Life Insurance and the Cook County Department of Probation.

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:

Williamson, Clarence Bernard, 1930-

Hodge, Adele (Interviewer)

Haynes, Frank (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Williamson, Clarence Bernard, 1930---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

State Representative

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 Clarence Williamson, August 9, 2000. 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 Clarence Williamson, Section
A2000_064_001_001, TRT: 0:30:40 ?

Clarence Williamson was born on June 1, 1930 in Chicago, Illinois to Robert and Annie Williamson who had migrated from Memphis, Tennessee. His paternal grandfather owned a construction business and his maternal grandmother operated a rooming house. Williamson's father owned a grocery store where Williamson started working as a young boy. Williamson attended St. Elizabeth Grammar School and St. Elizabeth High School in Chicago. He remembers going to Chicago's Savoy Ballroom and the Regal Theater to watch entertainers like Gene Ammons, Ella Fitzgerald, and Billy Eckstein. Williamson grew up in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood where there were many black businesses within the community. After graduating from high school, Williamson attended Roosevelt University in Chicago, Illinois where he met

future mayor Harold Washington and HistoryMaker Gus Savage. He dropped out, but later completed his studies at Chicago State University. After marrying Marion Degraffinreed in 1951, Williamson was hired to manage a store owned by U.S. Congressman William Dawson. He talks about his entry into politics as a precinct captain for Alderman Robert Miller in the 6th Ward around 1957. In 1980, Williamson was appointed as Eugene Barnes' replacement in the Illinois House of Representatives.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Clarence Williamson, Section
A2000_064_001_002, TRT: 0:30:13 ?

Clarence Williamson describes his re-election bid for the Illinois House of Representatives against HistoryMakers Ray Ewell and Monica Faith Stewart in 1981. Although he lost, Williamson year-long tenure in the state legislature gave him insight on the legislative process, political hacks, and the distinction between state and federal politics. He shares his advice for aspiring legislators and describes highlights from his political career. During the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Illinois, Williamson worked as a driver for the Alaskan delegation. He also worked in the mayor's office under Mayor Eugene Sawyer to increase minority participation in municipal-level contracts. Williamson talks about his marriage, his son, and his professional life where he worked as an insurance underwriter, a store manager, an engineer, and a butcher. He comments on how his own parents were business owners. He describes how he would like to be remembered and his community involvement as a board member of Jazz Unites. Williamson also describes Adelbert Roberts, the first African American in the Illinois State Senate. He leaves a message for his family and narrates his photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Clarence Williamson, Section
A2000_064_001_003, TRT: 0:13:58 ?

Clarence Williamson continues to narrate his photographs