

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Renault Robinson

---

## 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>	Robinson, Renault.
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Renault Robinson,
<b>Dates:</b>	July 3, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:22:37).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Community activist and police officer Renault Robinson (1942 - 2023) was the founder of the African American Patrolman's League and former head of the Chicago Housing Authority. Robinson was known for successfully bringing a civil rights lawsuit against the Chicago Police Department for discrimination against African Americans and Latinos. His work was instrumental in increasing the numbers of minority Chicago police officers. Robinson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 3, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_107
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Renault A. Robinson was born on September 8, 1942, in Chicago, Illinois, to Mabel and Robert Robinson. He performed a leading role in founding the African American Patrolman's League. Robinson is known for successfully bringing a civil rights lawsuit against the Chicago Police Department for discrimination against African Americans and Latinos. His work was instrumental in increasing the numbers of minority Chicago police officers.

After graduating from Hyde Park High School in 1960, Robinson joined Chicago's police force in 1964. His superiors recognized him as bright and respectful. However, this attitude towards him changed in the wake of the riots that followed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination in 1968. The brutality of the Chicago police caused Robinson and other black officers to form the Afro-American Patrolman's League. Although he felt persecuted by senior officers, Robinson continued to work for the Chicago police. During this time he served the National Black Police Association as a national information officer. In 1983, he left the police force to become chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority under the administration of Mayor Harold Washington.

Robinson pursued a business career in 1989 when he went to work as the vice president of ASI Personnel Service. In 2000, he founded his own temporary staffing agency, Renault Robinson Staffing. Robinson holds a bachelor's degree from Chicago's Roosevelt University. He and his wife, Annette, have four children: Renault, Jr.; Brian; Kivu; and Kobie.

Robinson passed away on July 8, 2023.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Renault Robinson was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 3, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Community activist and police officer Renault Robinson (1942 - 2023) was the founder of the African American Patrolman's League and former head of the Chicago Housing Authority. Robinson was known for successfully bringing a civil rights lawsuit against the Chicago Police Department for discrimination against African Americans and Latinos. His work was instrumental in increasing the numbers of minority Chicago police officers.

---

## 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:

Robinson, Renault.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Robinson, Renault. --Interviews

---

## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

Chicago (Ill.). Police Dept.

---

## Occupations:

Community Activist

---

Police Officer

---

## HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

---

## 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 Renault Robinson, July 3, 2002. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 7/17/2023 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 Renault Robinson, Section A2002\_107\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:45 ?

Community activist Renault Robinson begins by describing his family background and explaining how his parents came to live in Chicago. He summarizes his youth, sharing memories of his neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago, and describing his early educational and job experiences, including his time at Hyde Park High School. He concludes by detailing how he became a policeman in Chicago's Vice Control Division.

Video Oral History Interview with Renault Robinson, Section A2002\_107\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:44 ?

Renault Robinson recalls his early years with the Chicago Police Department, first as a policeman and later as a detective with the Vice Control Division. He then recounts the founding of the Afro-American Policeman's League. Robinson describes the corruption and intimidation central to police culture in Chicago, and details the threats and harassment he endured for participating in the League. He discusses black police officers' and political representatives' fear of confronting the Chicago Police Department and Mayor Richard J. Daley, and tells about helping to convince the African American politician Ralph Metcalfe to break with the Daley machine on the subject of police brutality.

Video Oral History Interview with Renault Robinson, Section A2002\_107\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:22 ?

Community activist Renault Robinson discusses in detail his employment discrimination lawsuit against the Chicago Police Department and its implications for both the city of Chicago and his own life. He recalls in particular the surveillance and harassment he endured from the FBI's notorious Red Squad. Robinson explains how his lawsuit helped to increase opportunities for minorities in the Chicago Police Department.

Video Oral History Interview with Renault Robinson, Section A2002\_107\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:07 ?

Community activist Renault Robinson recalls the effect of his employment discrimination lawsuit against the city of Chicago, including the exposure of the Chicago Police Department "Red Squad's" surveillance files. He also briefly describes the scene of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark's assassination. He then details his efforts to rid Chicago politics of corruption from his position at the Chicago Housing Authority. He concludes by reflecting on his life and career, as well as assessing the future prospects of black police organizations.

Video Oral History Interview with Renault Robinson, Section A2002\_107\_001\_005, TRT: 0:22:39 ?

Community activist Renault Robinson reflects on his life and career, and talks about the effects of his struggle against corruption on his children. He then narrates his personal photographs as they are recorded on videotape.