

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable William H. Gray, III

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Gray, William H., III
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable William H. Gray, III,
Dates:	June 15, 2012 and May 5, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005 and 2012
Physical Description:	8 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:55:42).
Abstract:	Foundation executive and U.S. congressman The Honorable William H. Gray, III (1941 - 2013) served as the chair of the Democratic Caucus and the Democratic Party whip; he was the first African American chairman of the Budget Committee. In addition to his government service, Gray also held high ranking positions in the nonprofit sector, including a thirteen year tenure as the president of the United Negro College Fund. Gray was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 15, 2012 and May 5, 2005, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_120
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Politician William Gray III was born August 20, 1941, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; his father Rev. Dr. William II was a college president, and his mother, Hazel Yates Gray, a dean. Gray attended Scott Street School in Baton Rouge; the Lab School of Florida A&M University; Meade Elementary School in Philadelphia; Cook Junior High School; and graduated from Simon Gratz High School in 1959 as vice president of student government and a four time varsity athlete. The Gray's often hosted then young Martin Luther King, Jr. when he was at Crozier Theological Seminary. Gray graduated from Franklin Marshall College with a degree in history in 1963; he received his M.A. degree in divinity from Drew University in 1966, and his M.A. degree in church history from Princeton University in 1970.

Gray became pastor of Union Baptist Church in Montclair, New Jersey, in 1966, and later succeeded his father as pastor of Bright Hope Baptist Church in Philadelphia in 1972. Elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1978 from Pennsylvania's 2nd Congressional District, Gray was an active member of the Congressional Black Caucus. Gray became chair of the Democratic Caucus and the Democratic Party whip; he was the first African American chairman of the Budget Committee. Gray wrote the legislation that led the fight to impose economic sanctions on South Africa in 1985 and 1986. Resigning from Congress in 1991, Gray was appointed president and CEO of the United Negro College Fund and served until 2004; during his tenure, he raised \$1.1 billion of the \$2 billion raised in UNCF's entire 58-year history. Following a 24-day hunger strike by TransAfrica's Randall Robinson, Gray led a Congressional Black Caucus Task Force to Haiti in 1994. Gray then served as special advisor to the President on Haiti in 1994/95. In 1995, Gray received the Medal of Honor from Haitian President Jean Bertrand Aristide.

A former professor of history at St. Peters College, Jersey State College, Montclair State College Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Temple University, Gray was awarded eight honorary degrees over the course of his career. Gray also was awarded the distinguished Franklin Delano Roosevelt Freedom of Worship Medal, and was consistently listed as one of *Ebony's* 100 Most Influential African Americans. In the latter part of his career, Gray served as the vice chairman of the Pew Commission on Children and Foster Care.

Hon. William H. Gray was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 5, 2005 and June 15, 2012.

Hon. William H. Gray passed away on July 1, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable William H. Gray, III was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 15, 2012 and May 5, 2005, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. Foundation executive and U.S. congressman The Honorable William H. Gray, III (1941 - 2013) served as the chair of the Democratic Caucus and the Democratic Party whip; he was the first African American chairman of the Budget Committee. In addition to his government service, Gray also held high ranking positions in the nonprofit sector, including a thirteen year tenure as the president of the United Negro College Fund.

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:

Gray, William H., III

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Gray, William H., III--Interviews

Nonprofit organizations--Employees--United States--Interviews

African American civic leaders--Interviews

African American politicians--Interviews

African American legislators--United States--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Pennsylvania

United Negro College Fund

Occupations:

U.S. Congressman

Nonprofit Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers|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 William H. Gray, III, June 15, 2012 and May 5, 2005. 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 William H. Gray, III, Section
A2005_120_001_001, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

The Honorable William H. Gray, III was born on August 20, 1941 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. His mother, Hazel Yates Gray, was born to Albert Yates, a professor of Greek and mathematics at Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Bertha Yates, an elementary school teacher. Gray's mother and her siblings were all college graduates, and her brother was a flight surgeon for the Tuskegee Airmen. Gray's father, William H. Gray, Jr., was born in Richmond, Virginia. He moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania when his father, William H. Gray, Sr., became pastor of Bright Hope Baptist Church. Gray's father was president of Florida Normal and Industrial College and then Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes in the 1940s; he moved to Philadelphia in 1950 to succeed his father as pastor at Bright Hope. Gray spent summers with his maternal grandparents in Baton Rouge, where his grandmother explained racism to him after a man at a department store yelled at him.

Nonprofit organizations--Employees--United States--Interviews.

African American civic leaders--Interviews.

African American politicians--Interviews.

African American legislators--United States--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable William H. Gray, III, Section
A2005_120_001_002, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

The Honorable William H. Gray, III spent his childhood summers in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where he learned to make ice cream, went to a restaurant run in a shack, and drank coffee with his grandfather. Gray and his family visited his grandparents to spare them the indignities of segregated travel that African Americans faced in the 1940s and 1950s. Gray first attended the Laboratory

School in Tallahassee, Florida, where his father was president of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes. After a year at Scott Street Elementary School in Baton Rouge, he continued at General George G. Meade School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania when his family moved there for his father's ministry. At Simon Gratz High School, Gray was vice president of the student body, graduated fourth in his class, and lettered in four sports including tennis, which he had been introduced to by Althea Gibson. Gray describes the history of historically black college and universities and his tendency to speak candidly as a child.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable William H. Gray, III, Section A2005_120_001_003, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

The Honorable William H. Gray, III often went to music shows on South Street while growing up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he saw the young Aretha Franklin and Miles Davis. He attended Simon Gratz High School in Philadelphia, where football star Leroy Kelly was a classmate. In his predominantly African American neighborhood, he lived with people of all social classes, including architect Frederick Massiah, civil rights lawyer Cecil B. Moore, and lawyer Sadie Alexander. The Grays were close with the King family, so Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. frequently came to dinner while he attended nearby Crozer Theological Seminary. Gray enrolled at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where he was one of very few black students, in order to experience a majority white environment. This led to his not having a network of college friends later in life. Gray won the Charles I. Landis Award for his thesis analyzing the motivations behind Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable William H. Gray, III, Section A2005_120_001_004, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

The Honorable William H. Gray, III attended the March on Washington in 1963. Although he was inspired by Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech, he regretted that the media coverage ignored King's pointed criticisms of America to focus on the "I have a dream" section. With the rise of television, King became the first African American leader with nationwide reach in the media and overcame an FBI smear campaign. In 1960, Gray's father contributed to a pamphlet supporting John F. Kennedy for president rather than a Republican; this was part of the shift of blacks to the Democratic Party during the 1960s and the corresponding Republican Southern Strategy, which led to the election of President Richard Nixon. Gray graduated from Drew Theological School in Madison, New Jersey in 1966, where he had picketed a barbershop for racial discrimination. He served as minister at Union Baptist Church in Montclair, New Jersey, where he also fought housing discrimination in the 1970 case Gray v. Serruto Builders, Inc.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable William H. Gray, III, Section A2005_120_002_005, TRT: 5:30:59 ?

The Honorable William H. Gray, III graduated in 1963 from Franklin and Marshall College, where he wrote his thesis on Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War under Professor Frederick Klein. With a letter of recommendation from Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he was accepted at Drew Theological School in Madison, New Jersey. At Drew, Gray specialized in church history, and often visited New York City to see jazz shows featuring musicians like Cannonball Adderley and HistoryMaker Nancy Wilson. He was a student minister at First Baptist Church and Union Baptist Church, both in Montclair, New Jersey. Upon graduating with his master's degree in divinity in 1966, he

became senior minister at Union Baptist. Upon learning of King's assassination during a church meeting, Gray announced the news to parishioners at Elmwood United Presbyterian Church, pastored by his friend HistoryMaker Reverend Dr. Joseph L. Roberts. After his father's death in 1972, Gray returned to Philadelphia to pastor Bright Hope Baptist Church.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable William H. Gray, III, Section A2005_120_002_006, TRT: 6:29:10 ?

The Honorable William H. Gray, III pastored Bright Hope Baptist Church in the majority-black neighborhood of North Philadelphia. He received his second master's of divinity from Princeton University in New Jersey. Determined to fight the Democratic political machine helmed by conservative Philadelphia mayor Frank Rizzo, Gray campaigned from 1972 to 1980 to increase the amount of African Americans and women in office, raise the qualifications of elected officials such as judges, and steer city bids to companies owned by minorities and women. He helped found an independent movement that elected progressives such as Hardy Williams, Roxanne H. Jones, Ed Rendell, Constance Clayton, and HistoryMakers The Honorables Chaka Fattah, Michael Nutter, Augusta Clark and Reverend Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr. to state and local office. In 1976, Gray ran for U.S. Congress against the incumbent Robert N. C. Nix, Sr., and lost by only three hundred votes; in 1978, he won against Nix and was elected to Congress.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable William H. Gray, III, Section A2005_120_002_007, TRT: 7:29:40 ?

The Honorable William H. Gray, III organized and bankrolled an independent coalition that elected progressive and minority Democrats to the Philadelphia City Council in 1979 over the opposition of Mayor Frank Rizzo. The coalition included HistoryMakers The Honorable Augusta Clark and Reverend Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr. Elected to the U.S. Congress in 1978, Gray became his class's representative on the House Committee on Steering, Policy and Scheduling. In 1984, he was elected chairman of the U.S. House Committee on the Budget. As a member of the U.S. House Subcommittee on Africa, Gray developed a plan, opposed by President Ronald Reagan, to impose limited sanctions on South Africa's apartheid regime. The bill was initially filibustered by Jesse Helms, but passed as the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 over Reagan's veto. Gray adjusted to Congress with the help of his friend HistoryMaker The Honorable Andrew Young, and stood up to Reagan's plan to cut overall spending while increasing defense spending.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable William H. Gray, III, Section A2005_120_002_008, TRT: 8:28:33 ?

The Honorable William H. Gray, III served as the first African American chairman of the U.S. House Committee on the Budget from 1985 to 1989, and majority whip from 1989 to 1991 under Speakers of the House Tip O'Neill and Tom Foley. During his congressional career, his aides included Steven L. Pruitt, the first African American chief of staff of a congressional finance committee, Alan Bowser, Marian B. Tasco, and HistoryMaker Singleton B. McAllister. Gray left Congress in 1991 in order to serve as president and CEO of the United Negro College Fund. In 2007, he retired as pastor of Bright Hope Baptist Church, having spent thirty-five years there which spanned his career in the U.S. House of Representatives and at the United Negro College Fund. Gray reflects upon his legacy, life, family and the leadership qualities that helped his career. Gray describes how bipartisanship has declined from the 1980s to the 2010s, his hopes and concerns for the African American community and how he would like

to be remembered.