Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Clay Evans

Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616
info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com

Creator: Evans, Clay Reverend

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Clay Evans,

Dates: July 4, 1993 and January 30, 2003


Physical Description: 7 Betacam SP videocassettes (2:33:35).

Abstract: Minister and nonprofit chief executive Reverend Clay Evans (1925 - ) is the
founder of Fellowship Baptist Church Evans was interviewed by The
This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

Identification: A1993_001

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Aside from his duties as leader of Fellowship Baptist Church, Reverend Evans has also developed
an extensive evangelical following. His weekly sermons reach millions of people throughout the
Midwest and the South via television and radio. Altogether, Reverend Evans' ministry broadcasts
reach an audience that is spread across ten states. The radio and television programs often feature
gospel songs from the Fellowship Baptist Church's 250-voice choir, which has produced eight
gospel albums with Reverend Evans as vocal soloist.

Reverend Evans has been a leader in the civil rights movement since 1965, when he joined forces
with Reverend Jesse Jackson and helped create Operation PUSH. Between 1971 and 1976,
Reverend Evans served as National Board Chairman of this prestigious national organization. As
Chairman of PUSH, Reverend Evans was responsible for setting the direction of the important
African American organization. In 1988 he was appointed as a member of the International
Committee of Reference, which seeks to create a global ministry.

In 1982 Reverend Evans published his autobiography, "From Plough Handle to Pulpit", which
describes his journey from the fields of Brownsville, Tennessee to the forefront of the international
civil rights struggle. During the course of his many years in the pulpit, Reverend Evans has been
responsible for launching the ministerial careers of eighty-one persons who have studied with him.
Currently, Reverend Evans is married to Lutha Mae Hollingshed, with whom he has five children.
Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reverend Clay Evans was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on July 4, 1993 and Larry Crowe on January 30, 2003 in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 7 Betacam SP videocassettes. Minister and nonprofit chief executive Reverend Clay Evans (1925 - ) is the founder of Fellowship Baptist Church

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:

Evans, Clay, Rev.

Richardson, Julieanna, L. (Interviewer)

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

Evans, Clay, Rev.--Interviews.

African American religious leaders--Interviews.
African American Ministers—Interviews.

Civil rights Activists—Interviews.

**Organizations:**

- HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)
- The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection
- Operation PUSH (U.S.)
- Fellowship Baptist Church.

**HistoryMakers® Category:**

ReligionMakers

**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**


**Processing Information**

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 6/3/2015 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, July 4, 1993 and January 30, 2003

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Clay Evans, Section A1993_001_001_001, TRT: 0:20:00 1993/07/04

Reverend Clay Evans described the influential Civil Rights ministers and leaders who helped shape his career and his ministry, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., HistoryMaker Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr., Dr. Louis Rawls, Reverend Clarence H. Cobbs, Reverend Louis Boddie, and Reverend C. J. Rogers. Evans then talked about the role the church has played in the black community. He attributed the success of the Civil Rights Movement to the institution of the church in the black community. Then, Evans reflected on the impact the Civil Rights Movement had on the black community and on American society as a whole. Lastly, Evans described that he attributes his success to his spirituality and ministry.

African American Ministers.
African American civil rights leaders.
African American religious leaders--Interviews.
Spirituality.
Civil rights--Religious aspects.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Clay Evans, Section A1993_001_001_002, TRT: 0:02:30 1993/07/04

Reverend Clay Evans described that he would like to be remembered as man with integrity.
Integrity.
African American leadership.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Clay Evans, Section A1993_001_002_003, TRT: 0:29:25 2003/01/30

Reverend Clay Evans was born on June 23, 1925 in Brownsville, Tennessee to Henry Clay Evans and Estanuly Evans. His parents were sharecroppers in Tennessee, raising their nine children, working on a white farmer’s land. His father also dug wells around the countryside, and Evans often helped. Evans described his mother, Estanuly Evans, as resourceful, religious, and more educated than most African Americans he grew up with, finishing the eighth grade. His parents were Baptists, and Evans enjoyed attending Woodlawn Baptist Church in Brownsville, Tennessee and singing in the choir. His maternal grandfather was General Estes and his paternal grandfather was Tom Evans, who Evans remembers as being devoted to his family. Evans describes growing up very poor in rural Tennessee, where he experienced racism and hostility as a black youth in the Jim Crow Era South.

Sharecroppers--Tennessee.
African American Baptists--Tennessee--Brownsville.
Reverend Clay Evans grew up in Brownsville, Tennessee in the 1920s and 1930s, where he experienced violence and racism. In Brownsville in 1940, Elbert Williams was lynched when he tried to set up a chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Evans attended a make-shift school out of Woodlawn Baptist Church in Brownsville, Tennessee, and then he attended Carver High School where he graduated at age twenty-one in 1945. He was a poor student and a slow learner, though he was active in choir and at Woodlwan Baptist Church. After high school graduation, Evans moved to Chicago, Illinois to escape the violence and discrimination he faced living in the South. He initially wanted to become an undertaker, but he felt called to become a preacher. Evans then entered the Chicago Baptist Institute; and he met and married his wife, Lutha May Evans, in 1945 at their church, the Reverend Dr. Louis Rawls’ Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church in Chicago, Illinois.

Reverend Clay Evans attended seminary at the Chicago Baptist Institute in 1946. In 1950, he started his own church, the Fellowship Baptist Church on the South Side of Chicago, Illinois. Evans grew his congregation through a broadcast at Gary, Indiana’s WYCA. He was influenced by Reverend Clarence H. Cobbs and Reverend Louis Boddie in building his congregation at Fellowship Baptist Church. In 1961, he attended the National Baptist Convention in Kansas City, Missouri, when the Progressive National Baptist Convention was formed and dissention arose around the Civil Rights Movement. Evans remained with the original Convention, though he worked with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in the Civil Rights Movement. During this time in the 1960s, Evans got involved with HistoryMaker Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr. and Operation Breadbasket. He also worked with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. when he came to Chicago, Illinois in 1964 and was involved in the Chicago Freedom Movement and the Open Housing Movement.
Reverend Clay Evans worked with HistoryMaker Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr. throughout the 1960s and 1970s in the Chicago Freedom Movement and Civil Rights Movement, where they worked together on Operation Breadbasket. When Dr. Martin Luther King came to Chicago in 1964, Evans worked with him on the Open Housing Movement, and introduced him at the rally held at Soldier Field in 1966. In 1971, Evans and HistoryMaker Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr. founded Operation PUSH, later the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, and Evans served as its chairman of the board from 1971 to 1976. He developed a close relationship to HistoryMaker Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr., and ordained him in 1968. In 1968, Evans marched in the funeral of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Atlanta, Georgia. That year, he also worked on the Poor People’s Campaign in Washington D.C. Then, Evans describes his religious philosophy and his hopes and concerns for the black community. He then describes how he would like to be remembered.