

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Ray Ewell

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## Overview of the Collection

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| <b>Repository:</b>           | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com  |
| <b>Creator:</b>              | Ewell, Ray, 1928-   |
| <b>Title:</b>                | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Ray Ewell,   |
| <b>Dates:</b>                | July 7, 2000  |
| <b>Bulk Dates:</b>           | 2000  |
| <b>Physical Description:</b> | 4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:30:01).   |
| <b>Abstract:</b>             | State representative The Honorable Ray Ewell (1928 - ) served in the Illinois State Legislature until 1983, during which the first Black Caucus was formed. Upon retirement, Ewell began managing his own real estate firm. Ewell was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 7, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| <b>Identification:</b>       | A2000_049   |
| <b>Language:</b>             | The interview and records are in English.   |

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Raymond Whitney Ewell was born on December 29, 1928 in Chicago, Illinois. He was the second child of Whitney and Severine Ewell. Ewell attended Corpus Christi Elementary School and Englewood High School before entering the University of Illinois, where he received his B.A. degree in history and his M.A. degree in history education. Ewell then studied at the University of Chicago Law School, graduating in 1954. Membership in the 4th Ward's Young Democratic Organization proved unrewarding. After military service, Ewell briefly operated a gas station before deciding to practice law. Ewell became a partner in the firm of

Ewell, Graham, McCormick, Ross and Davidson.

Ewell's interest in politics was renewed during Charles Chew's campaign for Alderman in 1963. Chew, in turn, would become a mentor to Ewell, inspiring him to run for a seat in the state legislature in 1966. While in office, Ewell served as Spokesman for Elections. Ewell was active in Springfield when the first Black Caucus was formed and served as a state legislator until 1983. Currently, Ewell manages his own real estate firm.

Over the years, Ewell has been involved in many organizations, including the YMCA, the NAACP and the Chicago Conference to "Fulfill These Rights." He and his wife, Joyce, are the parents of three sons.

Ewell was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 7, 2000.

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## **Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Ray Ewell was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on July 7, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. State representative The Honorable Ray Ewell (1928 - ) served in the Illinois State Legislature until 1983, during which the first Black Caucus was formed. Upon retirement, Ewell began managing his own real estate firm.

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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:

Ewell, Ray, 1928-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hayes, Frank (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Ewell, Ray, 1928---Interviews

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African American politicians--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

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African American lawyers--Illinois--Chicago--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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Illinois

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## **Occupations:**

State Representative

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

PoliticalMakers

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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 The Honorable Ray Ewell, July 7, 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 2/5/2020 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 The Honorable Ray Ewell, Section A2000\_049\_001\_001, TRT: 1:30:01 2000/07/07

Raymond Ewell talks about his family history and childhood. His mother, Severine Ewell, was born in New Orleans, Louisiana and his father, Whitney Ewell, was born in Ewellville, Louisiana. Both of Ewell's parents were postal workers. Ewell describes his experience growing up in an upper middle class black community on the South Side of Chicago, and reflects on the ways race and class have changed in his neighborhood since the 1930s. Ewell attended Englewood High School, where his classmates included Oscar Brown, Jr. and James Forman. Ewell received his B.A. degree in 1949 and his M.A. degree in 1951, both from the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. Ewell married Joyce Ewell in 1953, and in 1954 he received his J.D. degree from the University of Chicago. After graduating, Ewell started a law practice in Chicago, where he worked with Leo Holt and James Montgomery. Ewell remembers a missed opportunity to purchase a building in the Chicago Loop for his practice.

African American families--Illinois--Chicago.

African American neighborhoods--Illinois--Chicago--South Side.

Childhood and youth--Illinois--Chicago.

University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign campus).

University of Chicago--African American graduate students.

African American lawyers--Illinois--Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Ray Ewell, Section A2000\_049\_001\_002, TRT: 2000/07/07

Raymond Ewell describes his involvement in Illinois politics. He remembers the corruption which plagued

Chicago politics in the 1950s and 1960s and describes the careers of many black politicians including William L. Dawson, Harold Washington, Corneal Davis, Richard Newhouse, Joe Robichaux, Wilson Frost, and Charlie Chew. In 1963, Ewell entered politics when he volunteered to work for Charlie Chew's campaign. Ewell remembers Chew's campaign, his outrageous personality, and his ability to attract the press. After an unsuccessful campaign against Charlie Chew, Ewell was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives in 1966.

Political corruption--United States.

African American politicians.

Illinois--General Assembly--House of Representatives.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Ray Ewell, Section A2000\_049\_001\_003, TRT: 2000/07/07

Raymond Ewell describes the workings of the Illinois General Assembly, including the formation of the first black caucus in 1969 and the election of Cecil Partee as the first African American President pro tempore of the Illinois State Senate in 1971. He also describes the personalities of the members of the first black caucus, which included Genoa Washington, Horace Gardner, Lewis Caldwell, Harold Washington, Corneal Davis, James Y. Carter, Kenneth Hall, Cecil Partee, Fred Smith, Richard Newhouse, Isaac Simms, James Taylor, Otis Collins, Robert L. Thompson, and Charlie Chew. Ewell reminds everyone of the control that Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley had on the Illinois General Assembly, and how he used the election of Cecil Partee to his political advantage.

Illinois--General Assembly--House of Representatives.

Illinois Legislative Black Caucus.

Partee, Cecil A., 1921-

Daley, Richard J., 1902-1976

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Ray Ewell, Section A2000\_049\_001\_004, TRT: 2000/07/07

Raymond Ewell reflects upon his legacy.

Philosophy, politics and society.