

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Paul Williams

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Williams, Paul, 1953-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Paul Williams,
Dates:	September 14, 2000
Bulk Dates:	2000
Physical Description:	3 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:16:53).
Abstract:	State representative The Honorable Paul Williams (1953 -) was voted one of the “10 Best Legislators” by Chicago Magazine, and has been credited with saving high school health clinics from budget cuts. He was also instrumental in establishing the Chicago Housing Authority Police Force, as well as in forming an independent Cook County Public Defender’s Office. Williams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 14, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2000_063
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Paul Lawrence Williams, Jr. was born the youngest of three children on July 22, 1953 in Chicago, Illinois to Paul and Sarah Williams. After graduating from Lindblom High School, Williams enrolled at Chicago State University, where he interned with the Illinois General Assembly, thus starting his political career. One of his mentors was Mayor Harold Washington, who ultimately encouraged Williams to run for public office. After completing graduate work at Sangamon State University (now University of Illinois Springfield), Williams enrolled at DePaul University Law School. Williams was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1984. In 1986, Williams was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives. During his tenure, Williams was instrumental in establishing the Chicago Housing Authority Police Force as well as in forming an independent Cook County Public Defender’s Office. Voted one of the “10 Best Legislators” by *Chicago* Magazine, Williams has also been credited with almost single-handedly saving high school health clinics from budget cuts. From 1989 to 1992, Williams served as Assistant House Democratic Floor Leader. At the end of 1992, he returned to private practice, but remains active in politics as a lobbyist. While working in Springfield, Williams met his wife, Erma. They are the parents of two daughters. He is an active member of the NAACP as well as the Illinois, Cook County and Chicago Bar Associations.

Williams was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on September 14, 2000.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Paul Williams was conducted by Adele Hodge on September 14, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 3 Betacame SP videocassettes. State representative The

Honorable Paul Williams (1953 -) was voted one of the “10 Best Legislators” by Chicago Magazine, and has been credited with saving high school health clinics from budget cuts. He was also instrumental in establishing the Chicago Housing Authority Police Force, as well as in forming an independent Cook County Public Defender’s Office.

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:

Williams, Paul, 1953-

Hodge, Adele (Interviewer)

Haynes, Frank (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Williams, Paul, 1953---Interviews

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

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Illinois

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 Paul Williams, September 14, 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).

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 Paul Williams, Section A2000_063_001_001, TRT: 0:29:54 2000/09/14

Paul Williams describes his family background. Williams was born to Paul and Sarah Williams on July 22, 1953, in Chicago, Illinois, the youngest of three children. Born in Athens, Tennessee, Paul Williams, Sr.'s pride prevented him

from holding jobs for long periods of time in a racist Chicago. He eventually managed a pool room successfully, which the family lived above. Sarah Williams worked as the family's breadwinner due to her husband's job inconsistency, and often encouraged her children to achieve as much as possible. Despite this encouragement, Paul Williams was a rambunctious youth who was not focused on excellence in school. He attended Lindblom High School, where he was shaped by the social culture of the late 1960s and 1970s. Williams recalls the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., the ensuing riots, being inspired by Chicago's gang culture, and the Vietnam War draft.

African American families--History.

African American parents--Illinois--Chicago.

Education, Secondary--Illinois--Chicago.

Vietnam War, 1961-1975.

King, Martin Luther Jr., 1929-1968--Assassination.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Paul Williams, Section A2000_063_001_002,
TRT: 0:30:10 2000/09/14

After graduating from Lindblom High School in 1971, Paul Williams enrolled at Chicago State University in Chicago, Illinois. As a member of the Midwest Model United Nations, Williams had the opportunity to intern for Illinois General Assembly, where he met then Illinois State Representative Harold Washington. Washington inspired Williams to attend DePaul University College of Law, which he graduated from in 1986. Washington became a close mentor to Williams, and in 1986 he encouraged Williams to run for an Illinois State Representative. After Williams' term ended in 1992, he became a lobbyist. Williams talks about mentoring young African American lobbyists and educating youth about Illinois' legislative process. He also describes contributions of Mayor Harold Washington and Senator Cecil Partee to the Illinois political landscape. Williams closes by talking about his wife, Erma Brooks Williams, and children.

African Americans--Education--Chicago State University.

Washington, Harold, 1922-1987.

Illinois. General Assembly--Internship programs.

DePaul University. College of Law.

Vocational guidance--Illinois--Chicago.

African American leadership--Illinois--Chicago.

African American families--Illinois--Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Paul Williams, Section A2000_063_001_003,
TRT: 0:16:49 2000/09/14

Paul Williams talks about the possibility of re-entering the Illinois political arena, as well as some meaningful moments from his political career. Williams is proud to have worked with HistoryMaker Judge Anthony Young and Senator Michael Devalier to develop legislation, and credits his most humorous legislative experience to State Representative Michael J. Madigan. Williams also talks about his mentors and his relation to Representative Lewis A. H. Caldwell. Williams reflects upon his life and career, and closes by encouraging listeners to work hard and do their best.

Young, Andrew, 1932-

African American politicians--Mentoring.

Madigan, Michael J.

Caldwell, Lewis A. H.
Encouragement.