

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Barack Obama

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## 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>	Obama, Barack
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Barack Obama,
<b>Dates:</b>	February 16, 2001
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2001
<b>Physical Description:</b>	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:49:05).
<b>Abstract:</b>	State senator, president, and U.S. senator The Honorable Barack Obama (1961 - ) ran for a vacant State Senate seat in 1996, and was successfully elected to represent the 13th Legislative District. In 2004, Obama successfully ran for a seat in the United States Senate representing Illinois, becoming only the fifth African American Senator in United States history. On November 4, 2008, Obama became the first African American president-elect when he won the election for President of the United States. Obama was sworn-in as U.S. president on January 20, 2009. Obama was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 16, 2001, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2001_082
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Barack Obama was born on August 4, 1961, in Honolulu, Hawaii. He attended Occidental College for two years before transferring to Columbia University in

New York, where he became interested in a career as a social activist.

After graduation, Obama found work as a community organizer, which led him to Chicago. Obama was hired to head the Developing Communities Project and served in this capacity for over three years. However, realizing the limitations of working at such a localized level, Obama enrolled at Harvard Law School. At Harvard, Obama excelled, eventually becoming the President of the Harvard Law Review, the first African American ever to hold this position. After he graduated from Harvard, Obama wrote a book, *Dreams from My Father*, based on his family's experiences. He went to work at the Chicago law firm of Miner, Barnhill & Galland.

On advice from friends, Obama ran for a vacant state Senate seat in 1996, and was successfully elected to represent the 13th Legislative District. In 2000, Obama ran for a seat in Congress but lost to incumbent Bobby Rush. In 2004, Obama successfully ran for a seat in the United States Senate representing Illinois, becoming only the fifth African American senator in United States history. On February 10, 2007, Obama announced that he would run for President of the United States. On June 3, 2008, Obama became the presumptive democratic nominee for the U.S. presidency. He is the first African American to ever win a major political party's nomination for president. On November 4, 2008, Obama became the president-elect when he won the election for President of the United States. He is the first African American president in the history of the United States. Obama was sworn-in as U.S. president on January 20, 2009.

Obama and his wife, Michelle, are the parents of two daughters, Sasha and Malia.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Barack Obama was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on February 16, 2001, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. State senator, president, and U.S. senator The Honorable Barack Obama (1961 - ) ran for a vacant State Senate seat in 1996, and was successfully elected to represent the 13th Legislative District. In 2004, Obama successfully ran for a seat in the United States Senate representing Illinois, becoming only the fifth African American Senator in United States history. On November 4, 2008, Obama became the first African American president-elect when he won the election for President of the United States. Obama was sworn-in as U.S. president on January 20, 2009.

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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:

Obama, Barack

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Obama, Barack--Interviews

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

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African American legislators--Illinois--Interviews

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African Americans--Genealogy

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Hawaii--Social life and customs

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Americans--Foreign countries

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Indonesia

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Racially mixed people--United States--Interviews

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Occidental College

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Columbia University

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Harvard Law School

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Community activists--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

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Project Vote (U.S.)

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Electricians--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

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Illinois. General Assembly. Senate

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African American politicians--History

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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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Illinois

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## **Occupations:**

State Senator

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U.S. Senator

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President

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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 Barack Obama, February 16, 2001. 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 Barack Obama,  
Section A2001\_082\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:35 2001/02/16

Politician and civil rights attorney Barack Obama lists his five favorites. Obama describes the backgrounds of both his mother and his father; he goes on to describe his mother's personality and influences. He shares his earliest memories of life in Hawaii and describes his adolescent behavior. The product of an interracial union, Obama describes his early experience defining an identity for himself. Lastly, he considers his mother's investment in the civil rights efforts of the 1960s.

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

African American legislators--Illinois--Interviews.

African Americans--Genealogy.

Hawaii--Social life and customs.

Americans--Foreign countries.

Indonesia.

Racially mixed people--United States--Interviews.

Occidental College.

Columbia University.

Harvard Law School.

Community activists--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Project Vote (U.S.).

Electricians--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Illinois. General Assembly. Senate.

African American politicians--History.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Barack Obama,  
Section A2001\_082\_001\_002, TRT: 0:31:20 2001/02/16

Politician and civil rights attorney Barack Obama reflects on the years he lived in Indonesia as a child. The product of an interracial union, Obama continues to discuss the process of defining a racial identity. Obama recounts his college years, first at Occidental College in Los Angeles, California, then at Columbia University, New York, New York. He describes his professional pursuits following college and particularly his employment as a community organizer in Chicago, Illinois. Finally, he recalls his years at Harvard Law School, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Barack Obama,  
Section A2001\_082\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:35 2001/02/16

Politician and civil rights attorney Barack Obama assesses his law school experience at Harvard Law School. He discusses his introduction into electoral politics helping to organize Project Vote. Obama then explains his decision to run for the Illinois General Assembly as a senator, and his first campaign for the office in 1996. Obama recounts his victory and describes his first experiences in Springfield, Illinois as an Illinois state senator.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Barack Obama,  
Section A2001\_082\_001\_004, TRT: 0:16:35 2001/02/16

Barack Obama discusses politics at the local and state level. He considers the role of government in society and characterizes a new generation of African American politicians, explaining how African American legislators have adapted to societal changes over the past thirty years, stating that he still believes African Americans can effect positive changes through politics. Obama also shares his personal view of how governments can help improve the lives of African Americans. He then names influential

figures in his life and describes his own legacy.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Barack Obama,  
Section A2001\_082\_Obama\_Barack\_06\_MED\_002, TRT: 0:30:00  
2007/10/12

This tape contains an episode of the "Chris Matthews Show." The episode number is 604 and aired on October 13th and 14th of 2007.

Chris Matthews hosts a roundtable discussion with political commentators about the candidates campaigning for the 2008 presidential election. The discussion covers several topics all stemming from the New Hampshire and Iowa caucuses and the perceived electability of all of the Democratic and Republican candidates based on the results of the caucuses.

The political commentators on the program were Elisabeth Bumiller from "The New York Times," John Heilemann from "New York" magazine, Anne Kornblut from "The Washington Post," and "Des Moines Register" columnist David Yepsen.

Video footage of Hillary Clinton and Mitt Romney was used throughout the program.

A clip of Hon. Barack Obama's HistoryMakers interview is used on the show. In the clip, he talks about his experiences in law school and what he learned while he was there. The context of the clip is used in a discussion about whether or not one's educational background determines one's aggressiveness on the campaign trail. Matthews and his guests debate whether or not Obama's Harvard Law School education has softened him since his focus while campaigning has been to find the middle ground.

\*The tape was not published to THMDA.