

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ulysses Ford

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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>	Ford, Ulysses, 1943-2012
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ulysses Ford,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 18, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:23:49).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Business consulting chief executive Ulysses Ford (1943 - 2012 ) was the president of SDS Consulting. Ford was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 18, 2002, in Macon, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_020
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Ulysses Grant Ford, III was born September 28, 1943 in Charlotte, North Carolina to Roberta and Ulysses Ford, II. Ford graduated from West Charlotte High School in 1961. Moving to Talladega, Alabama to attend Talladega College, Ford pursued his interest in mathematics and received a B.A. in 1965. That year, he married Beverly Odom Ford, who now owns the consulting firm ASM & Associates. They have three sons.

From 1965 until 1968, Ford worked as a math teacher and basketball coach at Charlotte Catholic High School. In 1968, Ford became an accountant and worked for Allstate Insurance and Equitable Life Insurance. In 1972, he began his career

in civil service as an administrative assistant for the public works department of the City of Charlotte. In 1978, Ford left Charlotte to become the Director of Solid Waste Management for the City of Ann Arbor, Michigan. Ford went on to hold the title of Director of City Services for seven years in Fort Worth, Texas. Then he moved to Houston and served as Director of Public Works until 1992.

At this point in his career, Ford moved from government service to business and became responsible for marketing as the Vice President of Waste Management, Inc., a post he held for six years. In 1998, Ford founded SDC Consulting, Inc. in Macon, Georgia. SDC represents private companies, helping them increase their access to local governments across the country and thus combines the two main areas of his life's work.

Ulysses Ford, III has been a member of 100 Black Men of America since 1998 and served as president of the Municipal Waste Management Association of the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

Ulysses Ford passed away on March 20, 2012.

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## **Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Ulysses Ford was conducted by Samuel Adams on March 18, 2002, in Macon, Georgia, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Business consulting chief executive Ulysses Ford (1943 - 2012 ) was the president of SDS Consulting.

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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:

Ford, Ulysses, 1943-2012

Adams, Samuel (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Ford, Ulysses, 1943-2012--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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## Occupations:

City Government Administrator

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# HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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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 Ulysses Ford, March 18, 2002. 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 Ulysses Ford, Section  
A2002\_020\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:43 2002/03/18

Ulysses Ford describes his family's history. His mother, Roberta Ford, was born on December 29, 1923 in Charlotte, North Carolina to Fred and Edna Moore Tate. Fred Tate was a supervisor for a roofing company and had moved from Gaffney, South Carolina to Charlotte after he was offered a job. Ford's father, Ulysses Ford II, was born on September 9, 1921 in Bamberg, South Carolina to Geraldine Kizer and Ulysses Ford II. Ulysses Ford II abandoned his family when Ford was six and moved to Cleveland, Ohio. To support their mother, Ford and his younger brothers Frederick Ford and DeHavillane Ford did chores around the house while their mother worked as a domestic. Ford's grandfather, Fred Tate, became the primary male influence in his life. Ford remembers his kindergarten, the closeness of his community, and the mischief he got into as a child.

Video Oral History Interview with Ulysses Ford, Section  
A2002\_020\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:29 2002/03/18

Ulysses Ford describes his childhood experience at church, school, and the Boy Scouts. Ford attended the Little Rock A.M.E. Zion Church, led by Bishop George Leake, weekly and was pastor of its junior church. He recalls his church community being nurturing and providing his first opportunity to speak in public. Ford was a Boy Scout throughout his childhood, before becoming an Eagle Scout, Den Chief, and counselor at Camp Oak. When he was a teenager, Ford discovered the differences between his black scout camp and the white camp a few miles away. Ford attended West Charlotte High School, where he excelled as a student and played baseball, basketball, and football. After Ford damaged his knee playing football, his mother Roberta did not want him attending college on an athletic scholarship. With the support of his teacher Mr. Julian Warren Pyles, Ford received a scholarship to attend Talladega College in Alabama, where he enrolled in 1961.

Video Oral History Interview with Ulysses Ford, Section  
A2002\_020\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:21 2002/03/18

Ulysses Ford graduated from West Charlotte High School in 1961 and enrolled at Talladega College in Alabama, where he became involved in the Civil Rights Movement. Inspired by Russia's Sputnik launch in 1957, Ford majored in math with plans to become an electrical engineer. During his freshman year, Ford attended meetings to practice non-violent protests. For his Civil Rights protests, Ford was arrested three times: first for "trespass after warning" when he staged a sit-in at S. S. Kresge, then for a protest at a movie theater, and third after being beaten on Easter Sunday in 1962. Ford describes these experiences and his fellow activists Dorothy Vails, Bob Zellner, William Woods, and Eddie Wright, as well as when he met Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Reverend Jesse Jackson.

Video Oral History Interview with Ulysses Ford, Section  
A2002\_020\_001\_004, TRT: 0:26:04 2002/03/18

Ulysses Ford discusses his Civil Rights activities, meeting his wife, and becoming a high school math teacher. After Ford's three arrests during his freshman year at Talladega College, Ford's mother Roberta Ford was concerned for her son's safety due to the media coverage of protestors such as John Lewis and James Bevel, while his grandfather Fred Tate was outspoken in his support and had long been a defender of civil rights. In 1962, Ford met his future wife Beverly Ann Odom while working as a dining hall waiter for a United Negro College Fund event. They married in February of 1965. In May of 1965, Ford graduated from Talladega College with a B.A. degree in mathematics and became head of the math department and basketball coach at Charlotte Catholic High. Ford discusses the discrimination he faced as a black teacher in a predominately white high school, including racist students, being unable to enter the gym with his white team, and witnessing discrimination against black athletes and the teams he coached.

Video Oral History Interview with Ulysses Ford, Section  
A2002\_020\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:17 2002/03/18

Ulysses Ford talks about his experience working in insurance and for the City of Charlotte, North Carolina. In 1968, Ford became the first African American hired as an

insurance underwriter for Allstate in Charlotte and became their first black senior underwriter in 1969. Because of the racist environment at Allstate, Ford became an insurance salesman at The Equitable in 1970 and a district manager for them in 1971. In 1972, the Public Works Department in Charlotte was criticized by the Department of Labor for not having any black employees in supervisor positions, which inspired Ford to apply for a job as a public administrator. Ford became administrative assistant to Robert Hopson, the director of the Public Works Department for the City of Charlotte, North Carolina. As Hopson's assistant, Ford took minutes, created city programs, wrote speeches, and was an advocate on behalf of the employees in the solid waste division. During this time, Ford also began his struggle with alcoholism.

Video Oral History Interview with Ulysses Ford, Section  
A2002\_020\_001\_006, TRT: 0:29:14 2002/03/18

Ulysses Ford discusses recovering from alcoholism and his career in Public Works. In 1974, Ford quit drinking with the help of assistant Public Works director Presley Beaver. After it became clear that he would not be promoted to superintendent of the Public Works Department in Charlotte, North Carolina, Ford left to become Director of Solid Waste in Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1978. In 1980, Ford was hired as director of the Fort Worth Public Works Department, but was not offered the permanent job. Instead, he became Fort Worth's Director of City Services in 1981. In Fort Worth, Ford's reputation grew as a successful Solid Waste administrator due to his efforts to privatize garbage pickup. In 1987, Ford became Director of Solid Waste in Houston, Texas and was promoted to Director of Public Works in 1989. While in Texas, Ford's reputation grew and he was invited to speak at national and international professional organizations including the Solid Waste Association of North America and American Public Works.

Video Oral History Interview with Ulysses Ford, Section  
A2002\_020\_001\_007, TRT: 0:29:41 2002/03/18

Ulysses Ford discusses his experience at Waste Management and as owner of SDC Consulting. After twenty years of public service, Ford became Vice

President of Trash Collection at Waste Management in 1992, where he installed the Public Sector Services Department. In 1998, Ford left Waste Management to establish his own company, SDC Consulting. At this company, Ford used his connections with government officials to help private companies receive local government contracts. Ford also reflects upon his mentors and his legacy and narrates his photographs.