

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable William Jefferson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Jefferson, William J. (William Jennings), 1947-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable William Jefferson,
Dates:	June 10, 2003 and June 11, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:02:25).
Abstract:	U.S. congressman The Honorable William Jefferson (1947 -) established the law firm of Jefferson, Bryan and Gray, which went on to become the largest predominantly African American law firm in the South. In the course of his career in politics, Jefferson served in the Louisiana State Senate; the U.S. House of Representatives; and served on the Committee on Ways and Means and as co-chairman of the Africa Trade and Investment Congressional Caucus. Jefferson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 10, 2003 and June 11, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_127
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Congressman William J. Jefferson was born in Lake Providence, Louisiana, on March 14, 1947. Jefferson graduated from Southern University A&M and went on to graduate from Harvard University's School of Law. In 1996, Jefferson received his LL.M. degree in taxation from Georgetown University.

After graduating from Harvard, Jefferson established the law firm of Jefferson, Bryan and Gray, which went on to become the largest predominantly African American law firm in the South. Entering public service, Jefferson spent some time as an officer in the Judge Advocate General's Corps, and then as a law clerk for Alvin B. Rubin of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana. Jefferson later served as a legislative assistant to Senator J. Bennett Johnson. In 1980, Jefferson was elected to the Louisiana State Senate, where he was twice named Legislator of the Year by the Alliance for Good Government. Jefferson's move to Washington, D.C., came in 1991 with his election to the U.S. House of Representatives, where he continued to serve. In the House, Jefferson served on the powerful Committee on Ways and Means, and served as co-chairman of the Africa Trade and Investment Congressional Caucus. Jefferson was also chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Jefferson was active in spreading technology and education to individuals in his own district, and across the country, as he sought to remove the technological barriers that divide many people. For his efforts in bolstering technology initiatives, the Information Technology Industry Council named Jefferson Legislator of the Year. Jefferson also worked hard in Congress to bolster both domestic and international trade, leading both the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act and the New Markets Initiative to passage. For his efforts with the economy, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce presented Jefferson with its annual Spirit of Enterprise award. Jefferson and his wife, Dr.

Andrea Green Jefferson, raised five daughters.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable William Jefferson was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 10, 2003 and June 11, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. U.S. congressman The Honorable William Jefferson (1947 -) established the law firm of Jefferson, Bryan and Gray, which went on to become the largest predominantly African American law firm in the South. In the course of his career in politics, Jefferson served in the Louisiana State Senate; the U.S. House of Representatives; and served on the Committee on Ways and Means and as co-chairman of the Africa Trade and Investment Congressional Caucus.

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:

Jefferson, William J. (William Jennings), 1947-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Jefferson, William J. (William Jennings), 1947- --Interviews

African American politicians--Interviews

African American legislators--Interviews

African American civic leaders--Interviews

African American lawyers--Interviews

African American families

African Americans--Genealogy

African Americans--Social conditions

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Participation, African American

Southern States--Social life and customs

Southern States--Race relations--History

Civil rights movement

African Americans--Suffrage

African American young men

African American youth

Harvard Law School

Rubin, Alvin B.

Johnston, J. Bennett (John Bennett), 1932-

Louisiana. Legislature. Senate

Boggs, Lindy, 1916-

United States. Congress

United States--Foreign relations--Africa

African Americans--Reparations

Affirmative action--United States.

Criminal justice, Administration of.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Louisiana

Occupations:

U.S. Congressman

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 William Jefferson, June 10, 2003 and June 11, 2003. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 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 William Jefferson, Section
A2003_127_001_001, TRT: 0:30:48 ?

William Jennings Jefferson, U.S. Representative from Louisiana, tells about his family background, including his great-grandfather, a former slave who fought for the Union Army in the American Civil War. He tells about growing up on a small farm in East Carroll Parish, Louisiana, where black children generally received a sparse education scheduled around field work, and usually left school by age thirteen or fourteen. Jefferson, however, went on to high school, due to strong encouragement from a fifth grade teacher, church folks, and especially his own parents who, although they had not attended high school themselves, placed a great emphasis on education for their children, all ten of whom went to college. Jefferson also remembers the Civil Rights Movement in northeast Louisiana when he was a boy, especially his mother's involvement with African American voter registration efforts.

African American politicians--Interviews.

African American legislators--Interviews.

African American civic leaders--Interviews.

African American lawyers--Interviews.

African American families.

African Americans--Genealogy.

African Americans--Social conditions.

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Participation, African American.

Southern States--Social life and customs.

Southern States--Race relations--History.

Civil rights movements.

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African American young men.

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Rubin, Alvin B.

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Louisiana. Legislature. Senate.

Boggs, Lindy, 1916-.

United States. Congress.

United States--Foreign relations--Africa.

African Americans--Reparations.

Affirmative action--United States.

Criminal justice, Administration of.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable William Jefferson, Section
A2003_127_001_002, TRT: 0:29:59 ?

Congressman William Jennings Jefferson talks about his youth, recalling local Civil Rights leaders in northern Louisiana and the violent enforcement of white supremacy in the area. He describes his education at Southern University and

Harvard Law School, and his early jobs clerking for Judge Alvin Rubin in New Orleans, Louisiana, and serving as legislative assistant to Senator John Bennett Johnston. He also mentions his brief military service and tells about his successful run for the Louisiana State Senate in 1979.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable William Jefferson, Section A2003_127_002_003, TRT: 0:30:25 ?

Congressman William Jennings Jefferson talks about his political career in the Louisiana State Senate and his successful law practice. He remembers his 1990 campaign to replace the retiring congresswoman Lindy Boggs, and recalls highlights of his career in the U.S. House of Representatives in the 1990s.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable William Jefferson, Section A2003_127_002_004, TRT: 0:31:13 ?

Democratic Congressman William Jennings Jefferson of Louisiana talks about his work in the area of United States-African relations, arguing that African countries are generally favorable to the U.S. and that greater strategic and economic partnerships should be forged. He discusses domestic politics in the 1990s-2000s and issues of reparations, affirmative action, and criminal justice. Finally, he considers his own legacy and says he would like to be remembered as "someone who didn't forget where he came from and who cared enough about people to fight for them.