

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Herbert Tucker, Jr.

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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>	Tucker, Herbert E., 1915-2007
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Herbert Tucker, Jr.,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 14, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:53:01).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Civic leader and county superior court judge The Honorable Herbert Tucker, Jr. (1915 - 2007 ) was the presiding judge in the Edgartown District Court in Massachusetts. Tucker was appointed by Senator John F. Kennedy to the civil rights section of his 1960 presidential campaign and served as president of the Boston chapter of the NAACP. Tucker was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 14, 2003, in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_188
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Judge Herbert E. Tucker, Jr., was born in Boston on August 30, 1915. After graduating from the Boston Latin School, Tucker attended Northeastern School of Law, earning his J.D.

Upon completing his law degree, Tucker was hired by the Internal Revenue Service as a revenue agent in 1943. Tucker remained with the IRS until 1952, when he established a private practice, Cardozo & Tucker. In 1959, Tucker was named assistant attorney general of the state of Massachusetts, where he remained for nine years. At the time, he also served as president of the Boston chapter of the NAACP. In his dual capacities, Tucker sought a probe of the Boston Red Sox as a result of their releasing their only African American player in what Tucker described as an ongoing pattern of discrimination.

In 1960, Tucker was appointed by Senator John F. Kennedy to the civil rights section of his 1960 presidential campaign. In 1969, Tucker became commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities and was named chairman in 1972. The following year, Tucker was named special justice to the Municipal Court of Dorchester, and in 1974 he became the presiding justice of the district. Leaving Dorchester, Tucker became the presiding judge of the Edgartown District Court in 1979, where he remained until his retirement in 1985. For much of his career, Tucker was also a lecturer at several universities, including Boston College, Boston University, Northeastern University and Harvard University.

Tucker has been involved with a number of organizations over the years, including serving as the grand basileus of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity from 1955 to 1958. He currently serves as a trustee of the fraternity, a position he has held since 1969. He has also served as the chairman of the executive committee of Simmons College since that

year. His alma mater, Northeastern University, named him the alumnus of the year in 1971. Tucker and his wife, Mary, have two children. Tucker passed away on March 1, 2007.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Herbert Tucker, Jr. was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on August 14, 2003, in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civic leader and county superior court judge The Honorable Herbert Tucker, Jr. (1915 - 2007 ) was the presiding judge in the Edgartown District Court in Massachusetts. Tucker was appointed by Senator John F. Kennedy to the civil rights section of his 1960 presidential campaign and served as president of the Boston chapter of the NAACP.

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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:

Tucker, Herbert E., 1915-2007

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Tucker, Herbert E., 1915-2007 --Interviews

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African American judges--Interviews

African American civic leaders--Interviews

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African American civil rights workers--Massachusetts--Boston--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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Los Angeles County (Calif.)

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## Occupations:

Civic Leader

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County Superior Court Judge

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers|LawMakers

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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 Herbert Tucker, Jr., August 14, 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).

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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 Herbert Tucker, Jr., Section  
A2003\_188\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:11 ?

The Honorable Herbert Tucker, Jr. was born on August 30, 1915 in Boston, Massachusetts to S. Ella Fitzgerald Tucker and Herbert Tucker. His parents grew up together in Blackstone, Virginia and moved to Boston, where Tucker, Sr. intended to go to school. Instead, he became a waiter. Tucker is the fourth of six children and became very close to his father after his mother died, when he was eleven years old, and his older sisters left the house. From the age of five years old, his father told him he would be a lawyer. Tucker remembers growing up in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston and playing with wooden trains, and describes his childhood personality. Tucker attended W.L. Boardman School, Lewis Intermediate School and Boston Latin School. Tucker liked his teachers at the Latin School, enjoyed history and describes his classmates. Throughout high school, Tucker worked nights as a hotel doorman. He could not afford to attend college; a year after graduating high school he applied directly to law school.

African American judges--Interviews.

African American civic leaders--Interviews.

African American civil rights workers--Massachusetts--Boston--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Herbert Tucker, Jr., Section  
A2003\_188\_001\_002, TRT: 0:31:13 ?

The Honorable Herbert Tucker, Jr. entered law school at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts in 1935. He attended school at night, while working various jobs including working for the Works Progress Administration and the post office and working as a Red Cap at Boston's South Station. In 1936, he and Willard Townsend, founder of the United Transport Service Employees of America (UTSEA), unionized the Red Caps. In 1937, Tucker married Mary Tucker. He worked for the Internal Revenue Service in from 1943 through 1952. In 1947, he started Cardozo & Tucker, with his Portuguese law partner, Antonio De Jesus Cardozo. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy asked him to be his representative to Gabon, Africa. On the trip he met Charles Engelhard. He eventually became general counsel for humanitarian affairs for the Engelhard Company and helped get Kenneth Gibson elected as the first black mayor of Newark, New Jersey in 1970. Tucker describes the migration of African Americans to Boston after World War II.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Herbert Tucker, Jr., Section  
A2003\_188\_001\_003, TRT: 0:31:16 ?

The Honorable Herbert Tucker, Jr. opened his Boston, Massachusetts law practice, Cardozo & Tucker, in 1947. He became active in the NAACP in 1947, after his family experienced housing discrimination in Boston. As a member of the New England branch of the NAACP's Legal Redress Committee, he helped determine the NAACP's strategy to challenge segregation. During his tenure as president, the Boston chapter of the NAACP successfully forced the Boston Red Sox to integrate in 1959. He served as treasurer for John F. Kennedy's senatorial campaigns in 1952 and 1958 and help Kennedy build contacts within the black

community. In 1959, Tucker was appointed assistant attorney general of Massachusetts; he worked with Edward Brooke when he was elected attorney general in 1963. Tucker was appointed commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities in 1970. Through his work with Charles Engelhard, he helped get Kenneth Gibson elected as the first black mayor of Newark, New Jersey in 1970.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Herbert Tucker, Jr., Section A2003\_188\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:43 ?

The Honorable Herbert Tucker, Jr.'s father died in 1948 from complications related to being hit by a train. Tucker sued the railroad for negligence and won; it was his first case. Tucker served on the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities Commission from 1969 to 1972, and compares that role to the one of assistant attorney general, which he held from 1959 to 1968. While on the commission Tucker successfully forced phone companies to stop charging a deposit for customers in black neighborhoods. In 1973, Tucker was appointed special justice to the Municipal Court of Dorchester, Boston, Massachusetts. Dorchester was a white neighborhood and the community was upset by his appointment. He describes cases he presided over where prosecutors were seeking overly harsh sentences for African American children. Tucker believes he was a good judge because he used common sense. He describes the Boston Municipal Court system. In 1979, he was appointed presiding judge in the Edgartown District Court.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Herbert Tucker, Jr., Section A2003\_188\_001\_005, TRT: 0:30:14 ?

The Honorable Herbert Tucker, Jr. first visited Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts with his family when he was eleven years old. His aunt later bought a house on the island in 1950. The African American community on Martha's Vineyard began with Lois Mailou Jones, whose family established a rooming house for African Americans. Tucker explains how the community has grown over the years, lists the African American families who visit the Vineyard and talks about the Portuguese community in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts. Tucker joined Omega Psi Phi fraternity in 1935 because the African American men he respected such as, Benjamin Mays and Roy Wilkins were Omegas. He became Grand Basileus of Omega Psi Phi fraternity in 1955. In that role he made every chapter take a life membership in the NAACP. Tucker remembers his friend Edward Brooke, who assisted him in becoming general counsel for Simmons College in Boston, Massachusetts. Tucker reflects upon the Civil Rights Movement and the contemporary African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Herbert Tucker, Jr., Section A2003\_188\_001\_006, TRT: 0:21:24 ?

The Honorable Herbert Tucker, Jr. knew HistoryMakers Honorable George Leighton and Truman K. Gibson, Jr. Tucker recalls a time when John F. Kennedy borrowed a dime from him outside of the Massachusetts Statehouse on Boston Commons and he reflects upon Kennedy's presidential legacy. As he describes Boston, Massachusetts's African American community, Tucker reflects upon the fact that African American Bostonians experienced similar discrimination to African Americans living in the South. Tucker also mentions the murder investigation involving James "Whitey" Bulger, the brother of the former president of the University of Massachusetts system, William M. Bulger. Tucker explains why he likes the legal profession, reflects upon his legacy, and describes how he would like to be remembered. Tucker concludes by narrating his photographs.