

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Morris Robinson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Robinson, Morris, 1945-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Morris Robinson,
Dates:	August 20, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:31:55).
Abstract:	Bank executive and urban planner Morris Robinson (1945 -) is an economic development planner for the City of Evanston, Illinois, in addition to operating a small business. Robinson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 20, 2003, in Evanston, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_197
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Small business owner and city economic adviser Morris E. Robinson, Sr. was born on January 20, 1945, in Chicago. He was raised in Chicago and educated in its public schools, graduating from Marshall High School in 1963.

In the fall of 1963, Robinson enrolled at Loop Junior College, which he attended until the following year. In 1964, he attended Luther College in Decora, Iowa, where he spent a year before transferring to Roosevelt University. After his first year at Roosevelt, Robinson entered the Army and served from 1966 until 1970. When he returned to Chicago from active military duty, Robinson re-enrolled at

Roosevelt University, where he received his B.A. in political science in 1973.

After completing his education, Robinson worked as the first black officer at First National Bank, and later was employed by Allstate Insurance. In 1990, he started his own graphic design business, Robinson Designs, and opened a wireless telephone service franchise. Robinson later joined the Economic Development Department of the city of Evanston, Illinois, and became its economic development planner. In 1999, the United Way honored him as the city's employee of the year. Robinson married Emma Scarborough in 1989 in Little Rock, Arkansas. They live in Evanston.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Morris Robinson was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 20, 2003, in Evanston, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Bank executive and urban planner Morris Robinson (1945 -) is an economic development planner for the City of Evanston, Illinois, in addition to operating a small business.

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:

Robinson, Morris, 1945-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Robinson, Morris, 1945---Interviews

African American businesspeople--Interviews

Public officers--Interviews

Local officials and employees--Illinois--Evanston--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Evanston (Ill.)

Occupations:

Urban Planner

Bank Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Morris Robinson, August 20, 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 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 Morris Robinson, Section
A2003_197_001_001, TRT: 0:30:40 2003/08/20

Morris Robinson was born on January 20, 1945 in Chicago, Illinois. His mother, Emma Scarborough Robinson, was born in Little Rock, Arkansas. Her parents were killed in a car accident when she was very young. Robinson's maternal great-grandfather was one of the largest farmers in the Little Rock area and was known for his generosity during the Great Depression. Robinson's father, Earl Robinson, was also from Little Rock and his family can be traced to the turn of the 19th century in Morocco. Robinson's father and uncles were gifted singers. Robinson's parents were childhood friends in Little Rock. They married and moved to Missouri before settling in Chicago in the early 1940s, where his father worked in a factory. Robinson, his parents and his seven siblings lived in a predominantly European immigrant neighborhood on Chicago's northwest side. He remembers hearing Polish music from a tavern on the corner. He began school at Hans Christian Andersen Elementary School where there were few black students.

African American businesspeople--Interviews.

Public officers--Interviews.

Local officials and employees--Illinois--Evanston--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Morris Robinson, Section
A2003_197_001_002, TRT: 0:31:15 2003/08/20

Morris Robinson recalls some of his teachers at Alfred Lord Tennyson Elementary School in Chicago, Illinois. When Robinson was growing up, styles of dress were divided into Gousters and Ivy Leaguers. He was a Gouster and remembers his mother reprimanded him for untucking his shirt when he left the house. Morrison attended Marshall Metro High School where he ran track, was in

the journalism club and on the fencing team. He went to Loop Junior College in downtown Chicago before enrolling at Luther College in Iowa for a year. He then transferred to Roosevelt University, where he met his wife. Robinson was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1967. He was sent to Officers Training School for artillery and upon graduation, was stationed in Italy guarding missiles. In 1970 he was released from duty. He earned his B.A. degree at Roosevelt and went on to graduate school.

Video Oral History Interview with Morris Robinson, Section
A2003_197_001_003, TRT: 0:29:45 2003/08/20

Morris Robinson was discharged from the U.S. Army in 1970 and returned to Roosevelt University as a part-time student while also working. He earned his B.A. degree in political science and was recruited by an old friend to apply for a branch management training program at First National Bank of Chicago. Though he never worked in a branch bank, he rose to vice president over the course of his career. During his time at the bank, Robinson advised a younger African American colleague to comply with the standards of dress, made connections with more experienced coworkers and at times faced hostility because of his race. Robinson worked for First National for fifteen years, then moved to Allstate. After six years, he started a graphic design business with his son, Robinson Designs. Robinson describes his hopes for African American youth and talks about coming home from his first year at Luther College.

Video Oral History Interview with Morris Robinson, Section
A2003_197_001_004, TRT: 0:29:05 2003/08/20

Morris Robinson moved to Evanston, Illinois in 1980. He bought a house on Sheridan Road from Chicago politician Abner Mivka. At the time of the interview, Robinson worked for the City of Evanston as the economic development planner. He talks about the challenges of managing community participation in the economic development projects, Evanston's successful redevelopment of its downtown and the city's relationship to Northwestern University, which sits within the city limits. He his son, Morris "Dino" Robinson, was the president of the Evanston Historical Society and has

archived the city's history and the history of black settlement on the North Shore.

Video Oral History Interview with Morris Robinson, Section A2003_197_001_005, TRT: 0:31:10 2003/08/20

Morris Robinson collects timepieces, paperweights, art and optical items, such as cameras, microscopes and telescopes. His other hobby is astronomy. He talks about his older brother, who introduced him to Broadway musicals. Robinson describes his concerns for the African American community and how he would like to be remembered. He reflects upon his legacy and concludes by narrating his photographs.