

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Leslie Outerbridge

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Outerbridge, Leslie, 1936-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Leslie Outerbridge,
Dates:	December 9, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:50:47).
Abstract:	Fire fighter and labor activist Leslie Outerbridge (1936 -) formed the Afro American Firefighters League (AAFL), which helped the United States Justice Department win an anti-discrimination lawsuit against the City of Chicago. Outerbridge was also a founder of the International Association of Black Professional Firefighters. Outerbridge was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 9, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_291
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Fireman Leslie Outerbridge risked his life to save others and risked his job for racial justice. Born December 29, 1936 in Chicago, Outerbridge grew up in the Cabrini Green projects. His father, a former cricket champion from Bermuda, taught him about fair play. Outerbridge was a good student at Jenner School and entered Wells High School early at age twelve. Dropping out at age fifteen, he joined the Air Force in 1953. There, he played on the installations' basketball,

football and baseball teams. After his discharge, Outerbridge drove a taxi, until his father's friend, Robert Thompson, a black firefighter, "sponsored" him for the Chicago Fire Department (CFD). Outerbridge passed the written exam, but "failed" his first physical. Later, Outerbridge found that his father's donation of \$300 ensured that he "passed" the second time around in 1961. Outerbridge later returned to school, earning a B.S. from Chicago State University in 1981.

In 1968, Outerbridge, along with Jim Winbush and Wesley Thompson and backed by the NAACP, Operation PUSH, and the Chicago Urban League, with inspiration from Father George Clements, Anderson Thompson, and legal assistance from Attorney Kermit Coleman, formed the Afro American Firefighters League (AAFL). The AAFL completed a study in 1973 that detailed the Chicago Fire Department's record of racial discrimination in hiring and promotional practices. The United States Justice Department filed a lawsuit against the City of Chicago that same year. Mayor Daley signed the court ordered "consent decree" in 1977, which resulted in increasing the number of black firefighters from 125 to 400 by 1979. Now, the number is over 1,000. Forced to fight a relentless paper war with unhappy CFD brass, Outerbridge discovered that paperwork was their weakness. For thirty-seven years he performed his duties and retired in 1995. Outerbridge was also a founder of the International Association of Black Professional Firefighters in 1969.

A talented photographer and part time model, Outerbridge has researched the history of African Americans, the CFD and the great Chicago fires – a history that goes back to 1873 when Willie Watkins was the first black firefighter. Outerbridge lives in Chicago's West Chesterfield neighborhood with his wife, Annie.

Bibliography:

Outerbridge, Leslie. *Memoirs of A Black Fire Fighter: Les Outerbridge, 1961-1995*. Self-published, 2002.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Leslie Outerbridge was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 9, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Fire fighter and labor activist Leslie Outerbridge (1936 -) formed the Afro American Firefighters League (AAFL), which helped the United States Justice Department win an anti-discrimination lawsuit against the City of Chicago. Outerbridge was also a founder of the International Association of Black Professional Firefighters.

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:

Outerbridge, Leslie, 1936-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Outerbridge, Leslie, 1936---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Fire Fighter

Labor Activist

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 Leslie Outerbridge, December 9, 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 Leslie Outerbridge, Section A2003_291_001_001, TRT: 0:29:40 2003/12/09

Video Oral History Interview with Leslie Outerbridge, Section A2003_291_001_002, TRT: 0:29:20 2003/12/09

Video Oral History Interview with Leslie Outerbridge, Section A2003_291_001_003, TRT: 0:29:50 2003/12/09

Video Oral History Interview with Leslie Outerbridge, Section A2003_291_001_004, TRT: 0:30:00 2003/12/09

Video Oral History Interview with Leslie Outerbridge, Section A2003_291_001_005, TRT: 0:30:00 2003/12/09

Video Oral History Interview with Leslie Outerbridge, Section A2003_291_001_006, TRT: 0:25:54 2003/12/09

Video Oral History Interview with Leslie Outerbridge, Section A2003_291_001_007, TRT: 0:29:00 2003/12/09

Video Oral History Interview with Leslie Outerbridge, Section A2003_291_001_008, TRT: 0:27:03 2003/12/09