

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Parren J. Mitchell, III

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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>	Mitchell, Parren J.
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Parren J. Mitchell, III,
<b>Dates:</b>	June 11, 2004
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2004
<b>Physical Description:</b>	2 Betacame SP videocassettes (0:54:33).
<b>Abstract:</b>	U.S. congressman The Honorable Parren J. Mitchell, III (1922 - 2007 ) successfully sued the University of Maryland, which had denied him entrance into their graduate school because of segregation, and was able to earn his graduate degree from there. He held a number of government positions and was influential in compelling government agencies receiving federal grants to set aside ten percent of the money for minority contractors. Mitchell was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 11, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2004_072
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Parren James Mitchell was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on April 29, 1922, to Clarence M. Mitchell and Elsie Davis Mitchell. Though their street address was an alley, Mitchell, his brother Clarence, Jr., and sisters Elsie and Anna Mae were all strivers. Mitchell attended Garnet Elementary School, Booker T. Washington Junior High School, and graduated from Frederick Douglass High School in 1940. Mitchell joined the United States Army and served as a commissioned officer of the 92nd Infantry Division during World War II, receiving the Purple Heart. He graduated from Morgan State University with honors in 1950, but segregation barred Mitchell from attending the University of Maryland Graduate School. With advice from his brother (who was an official of the NAACP) and his brother's mother in law (Lilly Mae Carroll Jackson, the state NAACP director) and with Thurgood Marshall as counsel, Mitchell successfully sued the University of Maryland for admittance to graduate school; he received his M.A. degree in sociology from the University of Maryland in 1952, and returned to teach at Morgan State.

Mitchell served as a supervisor of probation work for the Supreme Bench of Baltimore City from 1954 to 1957; executive director of the Maryland Human Relations Commission from 1963 to 1965; executive director of the Baltimore Community Action Agency from 1965 to 1968; and president of the Baltimore Neighborhoods, Inc. from 1969 through 1970. He was a pivotal player in the passage of Maryland's Public Accommodations Law of 1963. A constituency Mitchell helped organize backed his nephew, Clarence Mitchell, III's, successful run for the state legislature in 1963, and in 1970, backed by the same political organization, Mitchell was elected to the 92nd United States Congress, representing Maryland's 7th District.

Reelected to seven consecutive Congresses through 1987, Mitchell served as a member of the Committee on Banking; Finance and Urban Affairs; the chair of the Subcommittee on Access to Capital and Business Opportunities; the Joint Economic Committee; was chair of the Subcommittee on Minority Economic Development and Housing; and was House at Large Whip. As one of the thirteen founders of the Congressional Black Caucus in 1971, Mitchell was part of a 20th century resurgence of black political strength. In 1976, Mitchell attached to President Jimmy Carter's \$4 billion Public Works Bill an amendment that compelled state, county, and municipal governments seeking federal grants to set aside ten percent of the money for minority contractors and subcontractors; his amendment to the 1982 Surface Transportation Assistance Act also required ten percent set aside for minorities.

In 1980, Mitchell founded the Minority Business Enterprise Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc. (MBELDEF) and served as its chairman of the board.

Mitchell passed away on Monday, May 28, 2007 at the age of 85.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Parren J. Mitchell, III was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 11, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 2 Betacame SP videocassettes. U.S. congressman The Honorable Parren J. Mitchell, III (1922 - 2007 ) successfully sued the University of Maryland, which had denied him entrance into their graduate school because of segregation, and was able to earn his graduate degree from there. He held a number of government positions and was influential in compelling government agencies receiving federal grants to set aside ten percent of the money for minority contractors.

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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:

Mitchell, Parren J.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Lane, Edgar Carey (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Mitchell, Parren J.--Interviews

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State governments--Officials and employees--Interviews

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African American civic leaders--Maryland--Interviews

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African American legislators--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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Maryland

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## Occupations:

U.S. Congressman

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

PoliticalMakers

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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 Parren J. Mitchell, III, June 11, 2004. 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 Parren J. Mitchell, III, Section  
A2004\_072\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

The Honorable Parren J. Mitchell, III talks about his political activity in the 1940s. He was born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1922 to Elsie Mitchell and Clarence Mitchell. Racial segregation in Baltimore influenced Mitchell to become involved in civil rights as a student at Morgan State College in Baltimore. He picketed the Ford Theatre in Washington, D.C. and participated in the Morgan State student boycott of 1945. After graduating in 1950, Mitchell worked for the Maryland Human Relations Commission, challenging segregation in public facilities. He developed a reputation as an organizer in Baltimore and remembers fellow organizer, HistoryMaker Reverend Vernon Dobson. In 1950, Mitchell filed a discrimination lawsuit against the University of Maryland in College Park after the school refused to let him enroll. He won the case and went on to earn an M.A. degree in sociology. He describes the Mitchell family's efforts to help his nephew, HistoryMaker Clarence Mitchell, III, become a Maryland state delegate.

State governments--Officials and employees--Interviews.

African American civic leaders--Maryland--Interviews.

African American legislators--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Parren J. Mitchell, III, Section  
A2004\_072\_001\_002, TRT: 0:24:03 ?

The Honorable Parren J. Mitchell, III describes his experience in the U.S. Army and his transition into politics. Mitchell was a Buffalo Soldier infantry officer with the U.S. Army in World War II during which he challenged segregation in the military and also earned a Purple Heart. In 1969, he entered the Maryland congressional race, and lost. He campaigned again in 1970, and became the first African American to be elected to U.S. Congress from Maryland. Mitchell describes the formation of the Congressional Black Caucus in 1971 and the opposition of fellow congressmen to the group. HistoryMaker John Conyers, Shirley Chisholm, and others, were also founding members. Mitchell describes the success of his 1976 public works bill that secured 4 billion dollars for minority contractors and minority-owned businesses. Mitchell reflects upon his legacy, and his hopes and concerns for the black community.