

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Dr. Otis Moss, 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>	Moss, Otis, 1935-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Otis Moss, Jr.,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 18, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:02:41).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Religious leader Reverend Dr. Otis Moss, Jr. (1935 - ) was a staff member of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and has been a pastor in the Cleveland, Ohio area since 1961. In 1994, he was the special guest of President Bill Clinton at the peace treaty signing between Israel and Jordan, and, in that same year, he led a special mission to South Africa. Moss was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 18, 2005, in Cleveland, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_070
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Religious leader the Reverend Dr. Otis Moss, Jr. is one of America’s most influential religious leaders and highly sought-after public speakers. A native of Georgia, Moss was born on February 26, 1935, and was raised in the community of LaGrange. The son of Magnolia Moss and Otis Moss, Sr., and the fourth of their five children, he earned his B.A. degree from Morehouse College in 1956 and his masters of divinity degree from the Morehouse School of Religion/Interdenominational Theological Center in 1959. He also completed special studies at the Inter-Denominational Theological Center from 1960 to 1961 and earned his D.Min. degree from the United Theological Seminary in 1990.

From 1954 to 1959, Moss served as pastor of the Mount Olive Baptist Church in LaGrange, Georgia. From 1956 to 1961, he also served as pastor of Atlanta’s Providence Baptist Church and therefore, simultaneously led two congregations from 1956 to 1959. From 1961 to 1975, he pastored the Mount Zion Baptist Church in Lockland, Ohio, and in 1971, he served as co-pastor, with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Sr., at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta. In 1975, he was called to pastor Olivet Institutional Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio, where he continues today.

Moss has been involved in advocating civil and human rights and social justice issues for most of his adult life. Having been a staff member of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he currently serves as a national board member and trustee for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Non-Violent Social Change. His work in the international community has taken him to Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Japan as a member of a clergy mission in 1970, and to Israel in 1978. In 1994, he was the special guest of President Bill Clinton at the peace treaty signing between Israel and Jordan, and, in that same year, he led a special mission to South Africa.

Moss is the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including Human Relations Award from Bethune Cookman

College in 1976, The Role Model of the Year Award from the National Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Development in 1992, Leadership Award from the Cleveland chapter of the American Jewish Committee in 1996, and an Honorary Doctor of Divinity from LaGrange College in 2004. In 2004, he participated in the Oxford Round Table in Oxford, England, and was a guest presenter for the Lyman Beecher Lecture series at Yale University.

Moss is married to the former Edwina Hudson Smith. They have three children, Kevin, Daphne (deceased), and Otis, III.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reverend Dr. Otis Moss, Jr. was conducted by Regennia Williams on March 18, 2005, in Cleveland, Ohio, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Religious leader Reverend Dr. Otis Moss, Jr. (1935 - ) was a staff member of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and has been a pastor in the Cleveland, Ohio area since 1961. In 1994, he was the special guest of President Bill Clinton at the peace treaty signing between Israel and Jordan, and, in that same year, he led a special mission to South Africa.

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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:

Moss, Otis, 1935-

Williams, Regennia (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Moss, Otis, 1935---Interviews

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African American clergy--Ohio--Interviews

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African American civic leaders--Ohio--Interviews

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African American families--Georgia

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Baptism

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Rural churches--Southern States

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Education, Rural--Southern States

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Segregation in education--Georgia

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Morehouse College (Atlanta, Ga.)

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Mays, Benjamin E. (Benjamin Elijah), 1894-1984

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Georgia--Politics and government

---

Civil rights movement--Georgia

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United States.Voting Rights Act of 1965

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King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968

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Baptists--Clergy--Ohio--Cleveland

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Operation PUSH (U.S.)

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Big churches--Ohio--Cleveland

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Presidents--United States--Election--2004

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Fathers and sons

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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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### Occupations:

Pastor

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### HistoryMakers® Category:

ReligionMakers

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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 Reverend Dr. Otis Moss, Jr., March 18, 2005. 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 Reverend Dr. Otis Moss, Jr., Section A2005\_070\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:01 ?

Rev. Otis Moss, Jr. talks about his parents' backgrounds, both of whom died when he was relatively young. Moss describes the custom of receiving religion via a network of churches and preachers in the rural South. Lastly, Moss talks about the ritual of baptism and what it meant to him as a young boy.

African American clergy--Ohio--Interviews.

African American civic leaders--Ohio--Interviews.  
African American families--Georgia.  
Baptism.  
Rural churches--Southern States.  
Education, Rural--Southern States.  
Segregation in education--Georgia.  
Morehouse College (Atlanta, Ga.).  
Mays, Benjamin E. (Benjamin Elijah), 1894-1984.  
Georgia--Politics and government.  
Civil rights movements--Georgia.  
United States. Voting Rights Act of 1965.  
King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968.  
Baptists--Clergy--Ohio--Cleveland.  
Operation PUSH (U.S.).  
Big churches--Ohio--Cleveland.  
Presidents--United States--Election--2004.  
Fathers and sons.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Otis Moss, Jr., Section A2005\_070\_001\_002,  
TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Rev. Otis Moss, Jr. discusses baptism as a rite of passage into adulthood. Moss then talks about his siblings and extended family and the sensorial memories of his childhood. He then imparts details about his early education and learning race pride while growing up in rural Georgia. Lastly, Moss refutes the notion that segregated education was inferior education for African Americans in the South.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Otis Moss, Jr., Section A2005\_070\_001\_003,  
TRT: 0:29:56 ?

Rev. Otis Moss, Jr. fondly recalls his experiences at Morehouse College in Atlanta, primarily his relationships with its president, Benjamin E. Mays. Moss then discusses the political climate in Georgia in the 1950s and need for going forward with the Civil Rights Movement despite fear and intimidation. Lastly, Moss explains the importance of voting rights for African Americans in the civil rights era.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Otis Moss, Jr., Section A2005\_070\_001\_004,  
TRT: 0:30:23 ?

Rev. Otis Moss, Jr. talks about the impact of the Voting Rights Act on the Civil Rights Movement. Moss then details various family members also involved with the struggle. He then discusses his personal friendship with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., then comments on the legacy of the Movement after Dr. King's death. Lastly, Moss briefly details his various pastoral assignments.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Otis Moss, Jr., Section A2005\_070\_001\_005,  
TRT: 0:29:05 ?

Rev. Otis Moss, Jr. briefly details his professional activities with the King Center in Atlanta and Operation PUSH in Chicago. Moss then recounts his decision to pastor at Olivet Institutional Baptist Church in Cleveland. He then details Olivet's various activities serving its community. Lastly, Moss discusses the Black Church, its involvement with the 2004 national election and faith-based initiatives.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Otis Moss, Jr., Section A2005\_070\_001\_006,  
TRT: 0:31:03 ?

Rev. Otis Moss, Jr. talks about the importance of his family, especially his son who is also a successful minister. Moss discusses his hopes for the future for African Americans. Lastly, he explains the symbolism of the Sankofa bird, and the importance of never forgetting the past when looking to the future.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Otis Moss, Jr., Section A2005\_070\_001\_007,  
TRT: 0:05:13 ?