

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Charles Richard Stith

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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>	Stith, Charles R.
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Charles Richard Stith,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 23, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:01:00).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Minister Reverend Charles Richard Stith (1949 - ) founded the Organization for the New Equality, served as ambassador to Tanzania under President Clinton, and founded the African Presidential Archives and Research Center at Boston University. Stith was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 23, 2005, in Boston, Massachusetts. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_076
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Reverend Charles R. Stith, who serves as the director of the African Presidential Archives and Research Center at Boston University, was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on August 26, 1949. Stith attended public schools in St. Louis, graduating from Charles Sumner High School in 1966. After two years at a junior college, Stith attended Baker University in Baldwin, Kansas, graduating in 1973. Two years later, Stith received his master's of divinity degree from the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia. Stith earned his master's degree in theology from the Harvard University Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1977.

By the time he was thirty, Stith was the senior minister at Union United Methodist Church in Boston; the youngest person ever appointed senior minister at the church. In 1985, while still serving as pastor at Union United, Stith founded the Organization for the New Equality (ONE), a non-profit organization with the goal of generating economic opportunity for women and people of color. Stith's efforts led to the first comprehensive community reinvestment agreement in the country, a \$500 million package for communities in Massachusetts. Stith was also involved with restructuring the Community Reinvestment Act, resulting in additional credit and capital for low and moderate-income communities of color.

After leading ONE for thirteen years, Stith was appointed by President Clinton as ambassador to Tanzania; his tenure as ambassador starting one month after the August 1998 bombing of the United States embassy in Dar es Salaam. Stith is credited with leading the embassy through its recovery; after his time in Tanzania, he founded the African Presidential Archives and Research Center (APARC) at Boston University.

Stith has received a number of awards and special appointments during the course of his career, including an honorary doctorate from his alma mater, Baker University. Also, in 1994, President Clinton appointed Stith to the official delegation to monitor the South African election. In 2001 former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle

appointed Stith to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

Stith and his wife, researcher and administrator at the Harvard School of Public Health, Dr. Deborah Prothrow-Stith, have raised two children: Percy and Mary.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reverend Charles Richard Stith was conducted by Robert Hayden on March 23, 2005, in Boston, Massachusetts, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Minister Reverend Charles Richard Stith (1949 - ) founded the Organization for the New Equality, served as ambassador to Tanzania under President Clinton, and founded the African Presidential Archives and Research Center at Boston University.

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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:

Stith, Charles R.

Hayden, Robert (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Stith, Charles R.--Interviews

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Archivists--Interviews

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Ambassadors--United States--Interviews

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African American clergy--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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## Occupations:

Minister

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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 Charles Richard Stith, March 23, 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 Charles Richard Stith, Section A2005\_076\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:59 ?

Reverend Charles Richard Stith was born on August 26, 1949 in St. Louis, Missouri to Dorothy Thompson Stith and Charles Stith. Stith's mother, born to Mary Thompson and Rudolph Thompson, was raised in The Ville, an African American neighborhood in St. Louis. She held a number of jobs as a waitress, draftsman, and nurse. Stith's father was born in Indiana to parents originally from Mississippi. His father died just after the family moved to St. Louis, and his mother, Pearl Stith, never remarried. After his parents' divorce, Stith was raised by his mother, who remarried Johnny Butler and had another son, James Butler. Surrounded by extended family during his youth, Stith spent summers with his paternal grandparents and lived with his maternal grandmother for a time in The Ville. At Turner Elementary and Middle School and Soldan High School, teachers saw his leadership potential. He was elected king of his kindergarten class, and was president of the eighth grade study body, the social club, and his youth group.

Archivists--Interviews.

Ambassadors--United States--Interviews.

African American clergy--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Charles Richard Stith, Section A2005\_076\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Reverend Charles Richard Stith recalls the Sundays spent at church and at his grandmother's while growing up. He was accidentally shot by an eighth-grade classmate, and his close brush with death influenced his career in the ministry. At Soldan High School, Stith joined student council and track, and was a founding member of the social club the egotists. Stith attended St. Louis Community College and pledged Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. While travelling to Kenya on a mission project with the West Presbyterian Church, Stith realized he wanted to enter the ministry. He enrolled at Baker University in Baldwin, Kansas and earned his B.S. degree in English and sociology. Attending a conference for the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta led to Stith attending Gammon Theological Seminary for his seminary degree. Stith was involved in civil rights activities in Missouri and Kansas. He picketed the Jefferson Bank & Trust, integrated the Fabulous Fox Theatre, and locked up the trustees at Baker University.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Charles Richard Stith, Section A2005\_076\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Reverend Charles Richard Stith learned lessons about political organizing through his student government campaigns at Baker University. While attending Gammon Theological Seminary in Atlanta, Georgia, he met influential civil rights leaders like HistoryMaker The Honorable Andrew Young and Hosea Williams. His work on Maynard Jackson's first mayoral campaign taught Stith the potential of political power. During his time at Harvard Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Stith became involved with the Black Ecumenical Commission. Stith spent eighteen months ministering at Wesley United Methodist Church before being appointed minister at Union United Methodist Church. Stith created the Organization for a New Equality (ONE). His efforts with ONE led Stith to work on the Community Reinvestment Act to ensure

communities of color could access credit and capital. President Bill Clinton appointed Stith ambassador to Tanzania. Stith describes his achievements as ambassador and his family's experiences in Tanzania.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Charles Richard Stith, Section A2005\_076\_001\_004, TRT: 0:31:21 ?

Reverend Charles Richard Stith completed his ambassadorship in Tanzania and returned to the United States in 2001. He founded the African Presidential Archives and Resource Center (APARC) at Boston University to redress the lack of resources about Africa and its leaders. In an effort to educate future scholars and influence policy, APARC collaborates with universities in Africa and in America to develop their archival content, give speeches, create reports on African leaders, and facilitate conversation among students and scholars to better understand Africa. APARC's overall goal is to chronicle trends and developments on the continent. Stith talks about Africa's central position in the global economy and its modernization. He reflects upon his life, how he would like to be remembered, and his hopes and concerns for the African American community. He concludes the tape by narrating his photographs.