

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Chaka Fattah

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Fattah, Chaka, 1956-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Chaka Fattah,
Dates:	May 5, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	3 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:29:20).
Abstract:	U.S. congressman The Honorable Chaka Fattah (1956 -) was elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in 1982. In 1988, he was elected to the State Senate, and in 1995, Fattah beat an incumbent to win the congressional seat. Fattah has been identified by Time magazine as one of the 50 most promising leaders in the country. Fattah was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 5, 2005, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_119
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

U.S. Congressman Chaka Fattah, United States Representative of Pennsylvania's second District, was born November 21, 1956 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Fattah's mother, Falaka Brown Fattah, and stepfather, David Fattah, raised him in the commitment-driven environment of The House of Umoja (Unity), one of the only urban boys homes in the country. David Fattah was a leader in The House of Umoja's "No Gang War Campaign" and "The Youth Movement to Clean Up Politics." Fattah attended city public schools, the Community College of Philadelphia, the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business and the University of Pennsylvania's Fels Institute of Government where he earned a Master's Degree in Government Administration. He also completed the Senior Executive Program for State Officials at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

In 1977, at age 21, Fattah ran unsuccessfully for the Office of City Commissioner of Philadelphia. He was elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in 1982 and to the Pennsylvania Senate in 1988. In 1995, Fattah defeated an incumbent to win his United States congressional seat. Fattah, in 1998, spearheaded educational initiatives such as GEAR UP, which partners low income high school students with colleges and universities and The William H. Gray College Completion Grant. His top legislative priority is the Student Bill of Rights, which identifies seven fundamentals for learning. Fattah supported the Reauthorization to Higher Education Act and the Workforce Investment Partnership Act. Fattah co-sponsored the African Growth and Opportunities Act, the Drug Free Communities Act of 1997, and the District of Columbia Financial and Management Assistance Act, which became law in 1995. Fattah designed "Read to Lead," a free summer reading program, and since 1986, convened the annual Fattah Conference on Higher Education. He has also played a key role in both the Pennsylvania Higher Education Facilities Committee and the Pennsylvania Higher Education Authority.

Fattah is co-chair of the Friends of the Caribbean Caucus and serves on the House Appropriations Committee, the

Subcommittee on Virginia/U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and Independent Agencies and is the ranking member of the Subcommittee on the District of Columbia. He also co-chaired The Web-based Education Commission. Identified by *Ebony* magazine as one of the 100 most important African Americans and by *Time* magazine as one of the 50 most promising leaders in the country, Fattah is married to Renee Chenault Fattah and has four children.

U.S. Congressman Chaka Fattah was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 5, 2005.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Chaka Fattah was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 5, 2005, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 3 Betacame SP videocassettes. U.S. congressman The Honorable Chaka Fattah (1956 -) was elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in 1982. In 1988, he was elected to the State Senate, and in 1995, Fattah beat an incumbent to win the congressional seat. Fattah has been identified by Time magazine as one of the 50 most promising leaders in the country.

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:

Fattah, Chaka, 1956-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Fattah, Chaka, 1956---Interviews

African American politicians--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Pennsylvania

Occupations:

U.S. Congressman

HistoryMakers® Category:

PoliticalMakers

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 Chaka Fattah, May 5, 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).

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 The Honorable Chaka Fattah, Section A2005_119_001_001, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

The Honorable Chaka Fattah was born on November 21, 1956 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Falaka Brown Fattah and Russell Davenport. His maternal great-great-great-aunt was Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, the abolitionist and poet. His maternal grandmother, Louise Carlyle West, graduated from St. Paul's College in Lawrenceville, Virginia, and his grandfather was a priest at St. Philip's Episcopal Church in Richmond. Fattah's mother was the women's editor for the Philadelphia Tribune and a public relations manager for entertainers like Otis Redding. His father was also from Philadelphia, where he cooked at Fisher's restaurant and drove an ice cream truck. Fattah's parents separated when he was about ten, and his mother remarried David Fattah, whom she met at the 1968 Conference on Black Power. He recounts his biological father's aversion to corporal punishment, and his stepfather's educational leadership with the House of Umoja. Fattah recalls piano lessons, paper routes, and attending church in his childhood.

African American families--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.

Education, Secondary--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.

African American parents--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (U.S.).

Black nationalism--United States--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Chaka Fattah, Section A2005_119_001_002, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

The Honorable Chaka Fattah grew up in the neighborhood of South Philadelphia, where he swam at the Christian Street YMCA and took piano lessons at the Heritage House. He attended Thomas Durham Elementary School, where he studied African American history and his favorite subject was reading. After Fattah's mother, Falaka Brown Fattah, married David Fattah, the family moved to West Philadelphia, and he attended William H. Shoemaker Junior High School. He first worked at Towne Pizza Shop and then as a junior counselor at Camp Pocono. When Fattah's older brother joined a gang, his parents opened their home to all fifteen boys in the gang, and began the House of Umoja. The house held weekly meetings where all residents joined in the decision-making. There, Fattah made lifelong friends such as Mikel Jones and Curtis J. Jones, Jr. The House of Umoja was visited by civil rights figures like Amiri Baraka and Imari Obadele, and took part in the No Gang War in '74 and the Stay Alive in '75 campaigns.

African American children--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.

Gangs--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.

South Philadelphia (Philadelphia, Pa.).

African American parents--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.

Crime prevention--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Chaka Fattah, Section A2005_119_001_003, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

The Honorable Chaka Fattah's family founded the House of Umoja, an

organization that adopted African cultural practices to support the betterment of young black men. Fattah considers how the house affected his philosophy on education. At Overbrook High School in Philadelphia, Fattah took college prep courses against his counselor's advice, and he and his friend Curtis J. Jones, Jr. were active in the student union. He supported Jones's campaign to become a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1976, and they also founded The Youth Movement to Clean Up Politics. As a teenager, Fattah served as director of The Youth Citizenship Fund's voter registration training program in Washington, D.C. He unsuccessfully ran for city commissioner in 1980, but defeated an incumbent to be elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in 1982, where he was mentored by House Speaker K. Leroy Irvis. Fattah received his master's degrees in government from the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard University.

African American gangs--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.

African Americans--Education (Higher).

African American politicians.

Irvis, K. Leroy, 1919-2006.