

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Joseph Henry Beasley

Overview of the Collection

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| Repository: | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com |
| Creator: | Beasley, Joseph Henry, 1936- |
| Title: | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Joseph Henry Beasley, |
| Dates: | June 22, 2005 |
| Bulk Dates: | 2005 |
| Physical Description: | 6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:55:35). |
| Abstract: | Civil rights activist, deacon, and police superintendent Joseph Henry Beasley (1936 -) served as the Southern Regional Director of the National Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, and as the president of African Ascension. Beasley's career was marked by a dedication to human rights in both Africa and the African Diaspora. Beasley was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 22, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| Identification: | A2005_144 |
| Language: | The interview and records are in English. |

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Human rights activist Joseph Henry Beasley was born to sharecroppers on a rural plantation in Inman, Georgia, on December 27, 1936. Beasley received his primary education in a segregated one room school house before moving with his family to Cincinnati, Ohio, where he excelled in the local public schools. It was during this phase of his life that Beasley began to set high expectations and committed himself to a life of service; he ultimately received his B.S. degree in criminal justice from Park College and attended graduate school at Clark Atlanta

University.

Beasley's career began in the U.S. Air Force, from which he retired as a police superintendent after twenty-one years of service. Beasley joined Operation PUSH (People United to Serve Humanity) in 1976 as a member of the Board of Directors of its Kansas City affiliate, and assumed the position of Executive Director of that chapter in 1978. Three years later, Beasley moved to Atlanta where he was named Chapter Coordinator, and in 1995 was named Southern Regional Director.

Under the leadership of the Reverend Cameron M. Alexander, Pastor of Antioch Baptist Church North, Beasley successfully tackled issues of equal justice, eradication of poverty, and economic development around the globe. Beasley worked with the African National Congress to register voters for the 1994 election that swept Nelson Mandela into power; served as a monitor in Haiti during that nation's second democratically held election in 1995; and made a high impact visit to Zambia after its contested 2002 presidential election. Closer to home, Beasley served as the Georgia Deputy Director for Jesse Jackson's 1984 and 1988 presidential campaigns, and also became engaged in the challenge of redistricting Georgia's congressional boundaries to increase African American representation in the United States Congress.

Beasley continued to serve as the Southern Regional Director of the National Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, founded by the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr., and as the president of African Ascension, an organization he formed to develop economic and political ties throughout Africa and the African Diaspora. Beasley served as a board member of the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York City; Afronet in Lusaka, Zambia; Afrobras in Sao Paulo, Brazil; Christ Institute in Atlanta; and is Chairman of both the Benedita de Silva International Foundation, and the Asian American Center, both in Atlanta, Georgia. The library at Zumbi dos Palmares College in Sao Paulo, Brazil is named in Beasley's honor.

The bulk of Beasley's later work focused on the unification of African descendants for economic, political, social, and cultural empowerment. Beasley received dozens of awards and was featured in the New York Times, Boston Globe, Los Angeles Times, and numerous other newspapers, periodicals and magazines, as well as on CNN and other major American television networks.

In addition to his many other blessings, Beasley married and had three children, nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Beasley viewed his life and his numerous accomplishments as a testament to the fruits of spiritual growth, vision and commitment.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Joseph Henry Beasley was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 22, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civil rights activist, deacon, and police superintendent Joseph Henry Beasley (1936 -) served as the Southern Regional Director of the National Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, and as the president of African Ascension. Beasley's career was marked by a dedication to human rights in both Africa and the African Diaspora.

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:

Beasley, Joseph Henry, 1936-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Beasley, Joseph Henry, 1936---Interviews

Human rights workers--Interviews

African American civil rights workers--Interviews

African American civic leaders--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States. Air Force.

Occupations:

Civil Rights Activist

Deacon

Police Superintendent

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers|ReligionMakers

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 Joseph Henry Beasley, June 22, 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 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 Joseph Henry Beasley, Section

A2005_144_001_001, TRT: 0:29:30 2005/06/22

Joseph Henry Beasley describes his family background. His mother, Alice Stallings Beasley, was born June 24, 1909 in Fayette County, Georgia, to Joe Stallings, an itinerant minister and sharecropper, and Emma Stallings. While her older sisters went to school, Alice had to work in the fields. Beasley's father, Rozie Beasley, was born June 5, 1912, also in Fayette County, to Henry Beasley, who died before Beasley was born, and Charlotte Allen, a practicing Methodist. Beasley's father was frequently arrested for selling moonshine, and when Beasley was about eight years old, his father escaped prison and fled to California, where he became a plumber despite having no formal education. Beasley recounts that his parents met at a festival in Fayetteville, Georgia. He was born shortly thereafter their marriage in Fayette County on December 27, 1936. His earliest childhood memories include the 1941 Pearl Harbor bombing, and the deaths of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Georgia governor Eugene Talmadge.

African American mothers--Georgia.

African American fathers--Georgia.

African American families--Georgia.

Prohibition.

Video Oral History Interview with Joseph Henry Beasley, Section
A2005_144_001_002, TRT: 0:29:20 2005/06/22

Joseph Henry Beasley describes his childhood in Fayette County, Georgia and Cincinnati, Ohio. As a child of sharecroppers, he had to work from a young age in the fields of Fayette County. He remembers being inspired by the rebellion of enslaved Haitians during the Haitian Revolution. Beasley remembers the sights, sounds, and smells of growing up in Fayette County where he attended the New Hope Church's grade school, then a one-room shack. Once a month, he went to church with his mother and siblings, while his father drank and gambled in the woods. Beasley's family read the 'Atlanta Daily World and the Atlanta Journal-Constitution and listened to radio programs like 'Amos and Andy.' He talks about racism in the South, the murder of Emmett Till, and U.S. embargoes

on Haiti. In 1951, Beasley and his brother moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, where he lived in a tenement with his father's extended family. In Cincinnati, he attended Robert A. Taft High School, while his father worked construction jobs in Dayton, Ohio.

Childhood and youth--Georgia.

Childhood and youth--Ohio--Cincinnati.

Sharecroppers.

Church.

Amos 'n' Andy (Radio program).

Education, Secondary--Ohio--Cincinnati.

Video Oral History Interview with Joseph Henry Beasley, Section A2005_144_001_003, TRT: 0:28:10 2005/06/22

Joseph Henry Beasley talks about his military career. After graduating from Robert A. Taft High School in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1956, Beasley enrolled in the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, but quickly gambled away his textbook money. He then enlisted in the U.S. Air Force, and spent twenty-two years as a police officer in the Strategic Air Command after completing basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. During his service, he travelled to England and to Casablanca, Morocco and served as police superintendent before retiring as a master sergeant. He also promoted equality for African American airmen. Beasley talks about the Cuban Missile Crisis and President John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963. He remembers the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968 and the shifting leadership of the Civil Rights Movement after Dr. King's death. He describes his commitment to nonviolence and admiration of HistoryMaker Reverend Jesse L. Jackson.

Education, Secondary--Ohio--Cincinnati.

Cincinnati College.

United States--Armed Forces.

Armed Forces--African Americans.

King, Martin Luther, 1899-1984.

Jackson, Jesse, 1941-

Video Oral History Interview with Joseph Henry Beasley, Section
A2005_144_001_004, TRT: 0:29:11 2005/06/22

Joseph Henry Beasley talks about his social justice activism. He identifies as African and adheres to a Pan-African philosophy. Beasley describes his career in Operation PUSH, a civil rights advocacy organization founded by HistoryMaker Reverend Jesse L. Jackson. In 1976, Beasley helped to organize the Kansas City, Missouri chapter of PUSH and became the chapter's Executive Director in 1978 after his retirement from the U.S. Air Force. In Kansas City, Beasley led initiatives to expand black educational attainment and employment opportunities. In 1984, he transferred to Atlanta, Georgia to become the Southern Regional Director for PUSH's affiliate, the Rainbow Coalition. The two organizations later merged to form Rainbow/PUSH. In Atlanta, Beasley and Jackson lobbied to change the Georgia state flag, which then included the Confederate battle flag, and fought several high-profile legal campaigns against the Coca-Cola Corporation for allegedly discriminatory practices.

Jackson, Jesse, 1941-

Operation PUSH (U.S.).

Rainbow/PUSH Coalition.

Social justice--United States.

Law--United States--Cases.

Video Oral History Interview with Joseph Henry Beasley, Section
A2005_144_001_005, TRT: 0:29:20 2005/06/22

Joseph Henry Beasley describes his social justice activism in the United States and abroad. With HistoryMaker Reverend Jesse L. Jackson's Rainbow/PUSH organization, Beasley fought three legal campaigns against the Coca-Cola Corporation in Atlanta, Georgia. After winning a \$193 million settlement from Coke for allegedly paying whites more than blacks for the same work, Rainbow/PUSH demanded that Coke in Africa transfer to an all-black ownership structure and pay employees ten times the Ugandan minimum wage. Rainbow/PUSH also sued the Boy Scouts of America for allegedly misrepresenting their membership numbers in the Atlanta

area and fought against discriminatory voter identification practices in addition to campaigning against police brutality. Beasley talks about his collaboration with Antioch Baptist Church in Atlanta as well as his work with leaders worldwide, including Brazilian Senator Benedita da Silva and the royal family of the Toro Kingdom of Uganda.

Law--United States--Cases.

Rainbow/PUSH Coalition.

Coca-Cola Company--Georgia--Atlanta.

Boy Scouts of America.

Social justice.

Video Oral History Interview with Joseph Henry Beasley, Section A2005_144_001_006, TRT: 0:30:04 2005/06/22

Joseph Henry Beasley reflects upon his life and legacy. He believes that financial reparations to the descendants of enslaved peoples are inevitable, and that whites are collectively guilty for the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow. With the Antioch Baptist Church of Atlanta, Georgia, he worked to provide housing and food for community members in poverty. Beasley talks about his hopes and concerns for the African American community, what he would do differently, and how he would like to be remembered. He has a daughter in Cincinnati, Ohio; and two sons: a neurologist and minister in Memphis, Tennessee, and a college administrator in Missouri. He concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.

Race relations in the United States.

Reparations for historical injustices.

Antioch Baptist Church (Washington County, Georgia).

African diaspora.

African American families.