Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Bishop John Hurst Adams

Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616
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Creator: Adams, John Hurst Bishop

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Bishop John Hurst Adams,

Dates: November 29, 2005

Bulk Dates: 2005

Physical Description: 9 Betacam SP videocassettes (4:04:38).

Abstract: Bishop and college president Bishop John Hurst Adams (1927 - ) served as Bishop for the African Methodist Episcopal Church for thirty-two years and rose to national prominence as a religious and civil rights leader. Adams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 29, 2005 in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

Identification: A2005_249

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Bishop and college president John Hurst Adams was born November 27, 1927 in Columbia, South Carolina to Charity Nash Adams, a homemaker and Reverend Eugene Avery Adams, an African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) minister and educator. Adams graduated from Booker T. Washington High School in Columbia, South Carolina and in 1947 earned an A.B. degree in history from Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina. Subsequently, he earned his Bachelor of Sacred Theology (S.T.B.) degree and Master of Sacred Theology (S.T.M.) degree from Boston University School of Theology in 1952 and 1956, respectively. Adams also studied at Harvard University and Union Theological Seminary.

As a seminary student, Adams was assigned to the pastorate of Bethel A.M.E. Church in Lynn, Massachusetts. Upon graduating, he served on the seminary teaching faculty at Payne Theological Seminary, Wilberforce University in Ohio. In 1956, Adams was selected to serve as President of Paul Quinn College, Waco, Texas during which time he also served as campus pastor to all the students. In 1972, Adams was selected as the 87th Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church after a prophetic ministry at First A.M.E. Church in Seattle, Washington and Grant A.M.E. Church in Los Angeles, California. At the time of his retirement in 2004, Adams had served as Bishop of five separate Episcopal Districts to include his home district of South Carolina from 1992 to 2000. He was Senior Bishop of the A.M.E. Church from 1988 until his retirement.

Adams served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees at the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC), Allen University, Edward Waters College and Morris Brown College. In addition, he served as transitional Chairman of the Board of Trustees at the Atlanta University Center. He founded and was the Chairman Emeritus of the Congress of National Black Churches, Inc. (CNBC). Moreover, Bishop Adams is the initiator of Executive Management Training for Black Church Leaders and Chairman of the Institute of Church Administration and...
Management (ICAM) Board of Trustees. He has been active with the Joint Center on Political and Economic Studies, Transafrica, National Black United Fund, King Center Development Board and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity.

Adams is the husband of Dr. Dolly Deselle Adams of New Orleans, Louisiana. They have three adult children and eight grandchildren.

Bishop John Hurst Adams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on November 29, 2005.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Bishop John Hurst Adams was conducted by Ed Anderson on November 29, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 9 Betacam SP videocassettes. Bishop and college president Bishop John Hurst Adams (1927 - ) served as Bishop for the African Methodist Episcopal Church for thirty-two years and rose to national prominence as a religious and civil rights leader.

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:

Bishop John Hurst Adams.

Anderson, Ed (Interviewer).

Jackson, Adrian (Videographer).

Subjects:
Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Bishop John Hurst Adams

Organizations:

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

African Methodist Episcopal Church

Paul Quinn College

HistoryMakers® Category:

ReligionMakers

EducationMakers

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


Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 8/25/2011 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
Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage, November 29, 2005

Bishop John Hurst Adams slates the interview and lists his favorites. His mother, Charity Anzello Nash, was a homemaker who balanced the needs of her family and community. Adams’ father, Eugene Avery Adams, Sr. served as pastor of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Columbia, South Carolina. Adams’ credits his mother and father for providing support and being role models for their activism and commitment to African American progress. Adams spent every summer at his grandparents’, Wesley and Lucy Adams, farm in Cokesbury, South Carolina. Adams notes that Cokesbury was composed of African American land and homeowners rather than sharecroppers or tenant farmers. The importance of education was told to him every day and it was expected that he would attend college.

African American families--South Carolina--Columbia.
Children of clergy--South Carolina--Columbia.
Farm life--South Carolina--Cokesbury.
African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Bishop John Hurst Adams talks about the importance of key African American institutions such as the church, the immediate family and the extended family not only for the improvement of the community, but also in the formation of African American youth. The strength of the African American community network allows it to support each other and come together in times of crisis. Adams speaks about this in the context of his own experience when the Ku Klux Klan burned a cross in front of his childhood home in Columbia, South Carolina and the use of U.S. military personnel at Fort Jackson to intimidate African Americans in Columbia, South Carolina. In addition, he reflects on the importance of African Methodist Episcopal colleges in helping to uplift African Americans.

African Methodist Episcopal Church--Education.
Ku Klux Klan (1915-).
African American churches.
Racism--South Carolina.
Violence--South Carolina.
Fort Jackson (S.C.).
South Carolina--Race relations.
African American extended families.
African American universities and colleges.
African Methodist Episcopal Church--Education.
Bishop John Hurst Adams discusses his childhood experience in Columbia, South Carolina and the influence of his father’s Civil Rights activities in the region on him. His father’s activities took place within the institution of the African American church, which was a meeting place for Civil Rights activities; and a location where African American youth could obtain leadership roles, opportunities for public speaking and learn how to play musical instruments. Adams notes that he benefited from the support of the extended network of family, which consisted of church members, teachers and neighbors. He talks about his school experiences and the influence of his teachers on his life.

African American churches.
African American extended families.
African Americans--Education (Elementary).
African Americans--Education (Secondary).
African American children.
African American youth--Religious life.
Civil rights movements.


Bishop John Hurst Adams speaks about the role and influence of the African American church during the Civil Rights Movement and on the lives of African Americans. Adams points out the importance of the second tier clergy in the Civil Rights Movement and their leadership in helping to organize people and events. Adams attended Boston University Seminary at the same time Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. did and he mentions that the concept of personalism influenced both him and King Jr. The seminary was a prime location for African American divinity students during the 1950s. While in Boston, Adams develops in his intellectual interests as well as continuing his social justice consciousness and agenda.

African American churches.
King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968.
Boston University.--School of Theology.
African American clergy.
Clergy--Education.
Personalism.
African American clergy--Training of.

Video Oral History Interview with Bishop John Hurst Adams, Section A2005_249_001_005, TRT: 0:29:43 2005/11/29

Bishop John Hurst Adams describes his ministries on the West Coast during the 1960s, mainly in Washington State and in Los Angeles. In Los Angeles, Adams worked in the Watts neighborhood, during the 1960s the community had a high concentration of African Americans and was the site of uprisings in 1965. He details a brief history of the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) church. Adams provides information on the A.M.E. social justice strategies during the Civil Rights Movement, such as their War on Poverty program, and Central Area Motivation Program (CAMP). While he was in Seattle, he created the Open House Ordinance and worked on public school desegregation initiatives. He talks about his advancement to being an A.M.E. church Bishop. Adams
reflects on the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy.

African American churches--California--Los Angeles.
African American clergy--Washington (State)--Seattle.
African Methodist Episcopal Church.
King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968.
Kennedy, Robert F., 1925-1968.
Bishops--United States.
African Methodist Episcopal Church--Bishops.


Bishop John Hurst Adams describes the clergy work that he did in Washington, D.C. and in Georgia during the 1980s. In addition, he discusses the goals of the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) church, the changes in church membership and the new national and international programs that the organization took on. The reason for the changes in focus were due to the need to stay relevant with the changing socio-economic landscape and to retain membership. He presents important philosophical, ethical and organizational connection between the Methodist and the A.M.E. movements. Adams provides a critique of America’s capitalist socio-economic system and the Ronald Reagan presidency.

African Methodist Episcopal Church.
African American churches--Georgia.
African American clergy--Georgia.
Economics.
Church membership.


Bishop John Hurst Adams recounts his years as a Bishop in South Carolina and his last years of his African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) church career. He discusses his philosophy of pastoring and the advancement of women into senior A.M.E. clergy positions in the 1980s and 1990s. One of the A.M.E. international programs that he talks about is the church's missionary work in South Africa and one national program that he was instrumental in founding is the Institute of Church Administration and Management (ICAM), which was created to improve clergy's leadership skills. The ICAM organization continues the A.M.E. mission to educate and develop human resources and capital versus just physical structures to help the African American community.

African American women clergy.

Women clergy.
African Methodist Episcopal Church.
Missions--South Africa.
Bishops--South Carolina.
African Methodist Episcopal Church--Bishops.
African American clergy--Training of.
Bishop John Hurst Adams discusses his ethical system and his belief that for the African American community to improve there needs to be improved standards of African American behavior and appearance, an emphasis on education, a continuance of affirmative action programs and a stronger African American church to counter the rise of the mega church. Adams himself has tried to embody these ideas in his own work and life by creating programs that develop the person and the community; and by fighting for social justice and equality for African Americans. Adams talks about the African Methodist Episcopal churches close links to Wesleyan Methodism, noting that among other reasons they both emphasize personal piety and education and have a passion for justice.

Ethics.
African American churches.
African Americans--Social conditions.
African Americans--Civil rights.
Affirmative action programs.

Bishop John Hurst Adams narrates photos he brought to the interview.