

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

---

## 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>	Adams, John Hurst
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Bishop John Hurst Adams,
<b>Dates:</b>	November 29, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	9 Betacame SP videocassettes (4:04:38).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Bishop John Hurst Adams (1927 - 2018 ) 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.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_249
<b>Language:</b>	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 well.

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 2004/2005, 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 was 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 was the husband of Dr. Dolly Deselle Adams of New Orleans, Louisiana. They had three adult children and eight grandchildren.

Adams passed away on January 10, 2018 at age 90.

---

## 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 Betacame SP videocassettes. Bishop John Hurst Adams (1927 - 2018 ) 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:

Adams, John Hurst

Anderson, Ed (Interviewer)

Jackson, Adrian (Videographer)

### Subjects:

Adams, John Hurst--Interviews

African Americans--Interviews

---

African American bishops--Interviews.

---

## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

African Methodist Episcopal Church

---

## Occupations:

Bishop

---

## HistoryMakers® Category:

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 Bishop John Hurst Adams, November 29, 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 Bishop John Hurst Adams, Section A2005\_249\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:18 ?

Bishop John Hurst Adams was born on November 29, 1927 in Columbia, South Carolina to Charity Nash Adams and Eugene Avery Adams, Sr. His maternal grandparents, Columbus Nash and Rose Nash, were farmers and landowners in the rural community of Cokesbury, South Carolina. His paternal grandparents, Wesley Adams and Lucy Dixon Adams, were also farmers in Cokesbury. They raised fourteen children. Adams' parents grew up together in Cokesbury, and both were the first in their families to attend college. His father earned a degree from Biddle University in Charlotte, North Carolina, while his mother graduated from Harbison Agricultural College in Irmo, South Carolina. They moved to Columbia, where his father became a minister at Bethel A.M.E. Church, and later a presiding elder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. They also raised four children, including Adams, who was the youngest sibling. Each summer, Adams' parents sent him and his siblings to live on their maternal grandparents' farm in Cokesbury.

African American families--South Carolina--Columbia.

Children of clergy--South Carolina--Columbia.

Farm life--South Carolina--Cokesbury.

Bethel African Methodist Church (Columbia, S.C.).

African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Video Oral History Interview with Bishop John Hurst Adams, Section A2005\_249\_001\_002, TRT: 0:31:02 ?

Bishop John Hurst Adams grew up in the close-knit, middle class neighborhood of Waverly in Columbia, South Carolina. There, Adams' father, Eugene Avery Adams, Sr., was a community activist, the president of Victory Savings Bank and chairman of the board of an African American hospital. Once, while Adams' father was at a Watch Meeting, the Ku Klux Klan burned a cross in his family's yard, and his father returned home to confront the Klansmen with a shotgun. His father was also committed to his children's education. At family dinners, he trained Adams to think critically by engaging him in debates. He brought Adams and his siblings to the 1939 New York World's Fair, and to lyceum events at South Carolina's historically black colleges. There, they heard speakers such as Howard University President Mordecai Johnson and historian Rayford Logan. In 1944, Adams' father took him out of school to hear Thurgood Marshall argue a civil rights case in Columbia. Adams also describes his wife, Dolly Adams, and their family.

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.

Video Oral History Interview with Bishop John Hurst Adams, Section A2005\_249\_001\_003, TRT:

0:30:19 ?

Bishop John Hurst Adams attended Waverly Elementary School in Columbia, South Carolina, where his teachers were active in the community. As a youth, he attended services, Sunday school and the Allen Christian Endeavor League at Bethel A.M.E. Church. He was influenced by his father, a presiding elder and former pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and by Bishop Reverdy C. Ransom. Adams went on to study at Carver Junior High School, and then Booker T. Washington High School, where he played basketball, football, baseball and tennis. He was also motivated by Principal J. Andrew Simmons, who was a skilled storyteller. After graduation, Adams attended Wilberforce University in Ohio for one year, and then transferred to Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina. Adams majored in history; pledged Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity; and earned an athletic scholarship. He played football under Coach Edward Jackson, and tennis under Coach L.C. Coleman.

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.

Video Oral History Interview with Bishop John Hurst Adams, Section A2005\_249\_001\_004, TRT: 0:31:11 ?

Bishop John Hurst Adams earned a history degree from Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina in 1947. After graduation, he moved to Ohio to pursue a law degree. However, he felt a calling to the ministry in 1948; and, with his father's guidance, decided instead to attend the integrated Boston University School of Theology under Dean Walter G. Muelder. While in seminary, Adams befriended Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and studied alongside noted theologians C. Eric Lincoln, Samuel DeWitt Proctor, and Evans Crawford. He was also a student pastor at Bethel A.M.E. Church in Lynn, Massachusetts. After earning a master's degree in sacred theology, he became the dean of students at Payne Theological Seminary in Wilberforce, Ohio. He taught there and at Wilberforce University, where he met his wife, Dolly Adams. From 1956, Adams served as president of Paul Quinn College in Waco, Texas, where he negotiated the integration of the local public schools and accommodations.

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 ?

Bishop John Hurst Adams left Paul Quinn College in Waco, Texas to pastor First A.M.E. Church in Seattle, Washington. There, Adams was elected to serve as chairman of the Central Area Civil Rights Committee. Through Adam's

activism, the City of Seattle passed an open housing ordinance; elected an African American school superintendent; and funded the Central Area Motivation Program, which was among the first War on Poverty programs. When Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in 1968, Adams spoke at the local demonstration in Seattle, where he read the speech written by Dr. King upon the death of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy. That year, Adams relocated to Los Angeles, California to pastor Grant A.M.E. Church. To attract residents of the local Watts neighborhood to the church, he implemented a Saturday education program, where the children of the congregation learned about African American history. In 1972, Adams was elected as a bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal church.

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.

Video Oral History Interview with Bishop John Hurst Adams, Section A2005\_249\_001\_006, TRT: 0:31:10 ?

Bishop John Hurst Adams served as the bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal church's Tenth Episcopal District in Texas from 1978 to 1980. During this time, he renewed the accreditation of Paul Quinn College in Waco, Texas to facilitate the training of new clergy. In 1978, Adams created the Congress of National Black Churches to serve as a communication platform for black churches. From 1980, Adams served as the bishop of the Second Episcopal District in Washington, D.C. He founded the Richard Allen Service and Development Agency to assist churches in Africa and the Caribbean that were neglected by development workers. He also doubled the district's membership, and was a vocal critic of President Ronald Wilson Reagan. In 1988, Adams became the bishop of the Sixth Episcopal District in Georgia. As chairman of the board of the Atlanta University Center Consortium, he obtained reaccreditation for Morris Brown College. Adams also talks about the Vietnam War, Iraq War and the military industrial complex.

African Methodist Episcopal Church.

African American churches--Washington (D.C.).

African American clergy--Washington (D.C).

African American churches--Georgia.

African American clergy--Georgia.

United States. President (1981-1989 : Reagan).

Economics.

Church membership.

Video Oral History Interview with Bishop John Hurst Adams, Section A2005\_249\_001\_007, TRT: 0:29:39 ?

Bishop John Hurst Adams ordained the African Methodist Episcopal church's first female elder while serving as the bishop of the Second Episcopal District in Washington, D.C., and later mentored Bishop Vashti McKenzie. He became a senior bishop in 1988; and, in 1992, returned to his home of South Carolina to serve in the Seventh Episcopal District. There, he helped to reaccredit Allen

University in Columbia, and was instrumental in the removal of the Confederate flag from the South Carolina State House. From 2000, Adams served as the bishop of the Eleventh Episcopal District in Florida and the Bahamas, where he reaccredited Edward Waters College, and developed a training program at the Asbury Theological Seminary-Florida Dunnam Campus in Orlando. In 2004, he retired as bishop. In Atlanta, Georgia, he taught church policy at Emory University's Chandler School of Theology, and was the board chairman of the Institute of Church Administration and Management. Adams also describes his missionary work in Africa.

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.

Video Oral History Interview with Bishop John Hurst Adams, Section A2005\_249\_001\_008, TRT: 0:18:09 ?

Bishop John Hurst Adams describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community, especially the continued need for affirmative action policies. He also talks about the role of the church in the African American community, and his concern regarding what he describes as an emphasis on theatrics and individual wealth, rather than communal peace and justice. Adams concludes the interview by reflecting upon his life and legacy; his values; and how he would like to be remembered.

Ethics.

African American churches.

African Americans--Social conditions.

African Americans--Civil rights.

Affirmative action programs.

Video Oral History Interview with Bishop John Hurst Adams, Section A2005\_249\_001\_009, TRT: 0:14:07 ?

Bishop John Hurst Adams narrates his photographs

Video Oral History Interview with Bishop John Hurst Adams, Section A2005\_249\_Adams\_John\_06\_MED\_001, TRT: