

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Louis Rabb

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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>	Rabb, Louis, 1913-2015
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Louis Rabb,
<b>Dates:</b>	July 8, 2006
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2006
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:06:14).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Academic administrator Louis Rabb (1913 - 2015 ) was associated with Tuskegee University for fifty-four years, during which he served as administrator of John Andrew Hospital, assistant to the president, and secretary of the board of trustees. He also oversaw the transition of John Andrew Hospital to the Tuskegee Bioethics Center. Rabb was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 8, 2006, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2006_096
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Academic Administrator Louis Adolph “Mike” Rabb was born on October 25, 1913 in Columbus, Mississippi to Emma Farnandis and Louis Rabb, who owned Rabb's Meat Market. Louis A. Rabb attended the local elementary school in Columbus, Mississippi, and was enrolled in Tuskegee Institute Middle School at the age of thirteen.

As a student at Tuskegee, Rabb met Dr. George Washington Carver, Dr. Charles Gomillion, P.H. Polk and Tuskegee president Dr. Robert Russa Moton. Rabb graduated from Tuskegee High School in 1931, and enrolled in college at Tuskegee University. While at Tuskegee, Rabb became friends with Ralph Ellison, Albert Murray and his future wife Marianna Hutcherson. He and Marianna married in 1938. Rabb became a staff member of Tuskegee University after earning his B.S. degree in business administration, and served as the secretary of labor for three years. He received a sponsorship from Tuskegee University to pursue a masters degree from Columbia University, where he earned a M.A. in personnel administration in 1942. Tuskegee also sponsored his Masters in Health Administration degree from Northwestern University in 1948, and appointed Rabb as the administrator of John Andrew Hospital. He later oversaw the transition of John Andrew Hospital to the Tuskegee Bioethics Center.

Rabb served as assistant to the president and secretary of Tuskegee's Board of Trustees for twenty-eight years under Dr. Luther Foster, from 1953 to 1981, when he retired from Tuskegee University. He passed away on April 23, 2015 at the age of 101.

Louis A. Rabb was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 8, 2006.

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## **Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Louis Rabb was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 8, 2006, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Academic administrator Louis Rabb (1913 - 2015 ) was associated with Tuskegee University for fifty-four years, during which he served as administrator of John Andrew Hospital, assistant to the president, and secretary of the board of trustees. He also oversaw the transition of John Andrew Hospital to the Tuskegee Bioethics Center.

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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:**

Rabb, Louis, 1913-2015

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews

Rabb, Louis, 1913-2015--Interviews

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African American college administrators--Alabama--Tuskegee--Interviews

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Hospital administrators--Alabama--Tuskegee--Interviews

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African American college administrators

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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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Tuskegee University

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## **Occupations:**

Academic Administrator

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

EducationMakers

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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 Louis Rabb, July 8, 2006. 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

## 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 Louis Rabb, Section  
A2006\_096\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:32 2006/07/08

Louis Rabb was born on October 25, 1913 in Columbus, Mississippi to Emma Farnandis Rabb and Allen Rabb. His paternal grandfather, who was nicknamed Mad Jack Rabb, was born a slave, and bought his freedom before the Civil War. Rabb's mother was crippled, and died while he was still a child. Born in the late 1870s, his father owned Rabb's Meat Market in Columbus, where Rabb and his five brothers, including Maurice Rabb, worked during their youth. In Columbus, Rabb was raised by his maternal aunts; attended church; and was educated up to the tenth grade. Although Columbus' schools and public institutions were segregated, his next door neighbors were white. Rabb's older brother, a college graduate, convinced his father to send Rabb to Alabama's Tuskegee Institute to continue his education. Rabb moved there to finish high school in 1927. His roommate was the captain of Tuskegee's football team, whom Rabb had known from Columbus. He first met George Washington Carver while walking by an oak tree on the campus.

Tuskegee University.

African American families--Mississippi.

African Americans--Education (Secondary)--Alabama.

Carver, George Washington, 1864?-1943.

Video Oral History Interview with Louis Rabb, Section

Louis Rabb attended Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, where he worked several jobs to pay tuition. During his high school years, Rabb studied tailoring as a part of Booker T. Washington's initiative to educate students in trades. During college at Tuskegee Institute, he majored in business administration, and joined the KiYi Club. Rabb recalls his professors, like P.H. Polk, Monroe Nathan Work, Charles Goode Gomillion; and the school's president, Robert Russa Moton. He graduated in 1935, and was hired by the school's new president, Frederick D. Patterson, to work as the assistant to the cafeteria director. As a staff member, Rabb befriended Ralph Ellison; married his wife, Marianna Hutcherson Rabb; and was responsible for procuring meat for George Washington Carver. He talks about Carver's lifestyle, and lack of interest in commerce. Rabb recalls how Tuskegee Institute was visited by celebrities like Will Rogers, and the construction of a hospital for African American veterans on the campus after World War I.

Washington, Booker T., 1865-1915.

Tuskegee University.

African American college students--Social conditions.

African American universities and colleges--History.

African Americans--Education (Higher).

Carver, George Washington, 1864?-1943.

Ellison, Ralph.

Murray, Albert.

Louis Rabb served as secretary of labor at Tuskegee Institute under its president, Frederick D. Patterson. He enrolled at Columbia University to pursue a master's degree in personnel administration. Rabb lived at the Harlem YMCA; was a friend of Albert Murray and Ralph Ellison; and graduated in 1942. He worked at Tuskegee Institute during the training of the Tuskegee Airmen, and befriended pilot Herbert Carter. Rabb recalls Eleanor Roosevelt's visits to the school, and flying in a plane

piloted by one of the black airmen. Rabb transferred to Tuskegee Institute's John A. Andrew Memorial Hospital. He was selected to study hospital administration at Northwestern University, and obtained a master's degree in 1948. He worked at Andrew Hospital until 1974, when he became the assistant to the university president. Rabb describes the Tuskegee syphilis experiment, which began when he was in high school. He had no knowledge of the experiment for many years, but recalls an interviewer's accusation that he was complicit.

Roosevelt, Eleanor, 1884-1962.

Tuskegee Syphilis Study.

Tuskegee University.

Murray, Albert.

Ellison, Ralph.

Video Oral History Interview with Louis Rabb, Section  
A2006\_096\_001\_004, TRT: 0:31:12 2006/07/08

Louis Rabb worked for John A. Andrew Memorial Hospital in Tuskegee, Alabama, which was named for Massachusetts Governor John Albion Andrew after a donation from his granddaughter, Elizabeth Mason. He recalls how doctors at the hospital formed the John A. Andrew Clinical Society, and joined the all-black National Medical Association. In 1953, Luther H. Foster, Jr. became president of Tuskegee Institute, and selected Rabb as secretary to its board of trustees. Rabb hosted dinners for board members like William Jay Schieffelin III; compiled board minutes; and led the search process that hired Benjamin F. Payton as president. He retired in 1981. He recalls recent construction projects at Tuskegee University, including the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center, and the renovation of the former hospital into the National Center for Bioethics in Research and Health Care. Rabb reflects upon his life; his international travel with his wife; his hopes for the African American community; and his legacy.

Tuskegee University.

Hospitals--Alabama.

African Americans--Hospitals--Alabama--Tuskegee.

Civil rights movements--Alabama.

Health services accessibility--United States--History--20th century.

Video Oral History Interview with Louis Rabb, Section  
A2006\_096\_001\_005, TRT: 0:03:54 2006/07/08

Louis Rabb met heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis during the early 1940s, when Louis visited Tuskegee Institute in Alabama to play golf with Rabb and Russell W. Brown. He concludes the interview by describing how he would like to be remembered.

Tuskegee University.

Louis, Joe, 1914-1981.