Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com

Creator: Toland, Frank Jefferson, 1920-2010

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Frank Toland, Sr.,

Dates: March 20, 2007

Bulk Dates: 2007

Physical Description: 5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:27:40).

Abstract: Civil rights activist and history professor Frank Toland, Sr. (1920 - 2010 ) was chairman of the history department at Tuskegee University from 1968 to 1984; he was also involved in the Civil Rights Movement and was elected to Tuskegee's City Council. Toland was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 20, 2007, in Tuskegee, Alabama. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

Identification: A2007_102

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Educator and civil rights activist Frank Jefferson Toland, Sr. was born on June 1, 1920, in Helena, South Carolina, to Fred Toland and Lily Mae Sligh. The period following the Great Depression put a large strain on Toland’s parents, and they eventually went their separate ways. After moving to Newberry, South Carolina, after the third grade, Toland attended Drayton Street High School and graduated as class valedictorian in 1939. After finishing a forty-two week military service beginning in 1942, Toland earned his B.A. degree in English, history, and political science from South Carolina State University.
Soon after, Toland obtained a part-time English teaching position at Wilkinson High School in South Carolina. Toland was then accepted into the University of Pennsylvania’s masters program as a history major. During Toland’s time at the University of Pennsylvania, he was the only African American student in the entire program. While attending the University of Pennsylvania, Toland worked for six months at William Penn Business Institute teaching English and business math. After receiving his M.A. degree in history in 1948, Toland attended the University of Minnesota and received his Ph.D.

In 1949, Toland left William Penn Business Institute and began working in the history department at the Tuskegee Institute (later Tuskegee University). It was at the Tuskegee Institute that he met his future wife, Maree N. Morse, who was a Tuskegee Institute graduate, and got acquainted with the late Booker T. Washington. The couple married on August 16, 1950, and later had three children. In 1968, Toland became the chair of the Department of History, a position he held until 1984. Also in 1968, Toland was elected unanimously as a member of the City Council of Tuskegee. Toland went on to become the head of the membership committee, the Chairman of the Political Education Committee, and one of the vice presidents of the Tuskegee Civic Association. Driven by a passion to change the racial inequality that existed in Alabama, Toland became involved in the NAACP and the Macon County Democratic Club and used his membership on the various committees as a platform to voice his opinions on race relations, especially in regards to the Voters Rights Act. Through his involvement with civil rights issues, Toland met numerous leading activists including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Reverend Ralph Abernathy.

Frank Toland passed away on September 12, 2010.

**Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Frank Toland, Sr. was conducted by Denise Gines on March 20, 2007, in Tuskegee, Alabama, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civil rights activist and history professor Frank Toland, Sr. (1920 - 2010 ) was chairman of the history department at Tuskegee University from 1968 to 1984; he was also involved in the Civil Rights Movement and was elected to Tuskegee's City Council.

**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:

Toland, Frank Jefferson, 1920-2010

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Toland, Frank Jefferson, 1920-2010--Interviews
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizations:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection</td>
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<td>Tuskegee University</td>
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<td>History Professor</td>
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**HistoryMakers® Category:**

CivicMakers\|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

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Frank Toland, Sr., March 20, 2007. 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 Frank Toland, Sr., Section A2007_102_001_001, TRT: 0:28:30 2007/03/20

Frank Toland, Sr. was born on June 1, 1920 in Helena, South Carolina to Lily Sligh Toland and Fred Toland. Both his paternal great-grandparents and maternal grandparents were slaves. Toland’s maternal grandfather, Levi Sligh, once tried to escape, and was threatened with castration. After his first wife died, he married Toland’s grandmother, Anna Sligh, who was the mixed race daughter of a slave owner. She taught Toland’s grandfather to read and write, and together they accumulated five hundred acres of land. However, after his grandfather suffered a paralytic stroke, their property was stolen by a white neighbor. Even so, Toland’s grandmother was powerful in the community because of her white relatives.
She once helped a man escape from the Ku Klux Klan; and, having recognized one of the Klansmen, launched a boycott of his store. In Helena, Toland’s mother worked as a domestic, while his father cured tobacco. When Toland was in the third grade, his family moved to Newberry, South Carolina.

African American educators--Interviews.
Universities and colleges--Faculty--Interviews.
African American civil rights workers--Interviews.
African American civic leaders--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Frank Toland, Sr., Section A2007_102_001_002, TRT: 0:31:10 2007/03/20

Frank Toland, Sr. grew up in Helena, South Carolina, where most African Americans worked on white-owned farms. Once, while bringing lunch to his uncles in the fields, Toland’s white neighbor forced him to harvest her blackberries, and he and his cousins accidentally set fire to her crops. When Toland was in the third grade, he moved with his mother, Lily Sligh Toland, to Newberry, South Carolina, where she had better opportunities for domestic work. His father moved to Tampa, Florida, and later separated from his mother. During the Great Depression, Toland attended the all-black Drayton Street High School, and worked for as little as five cents per hour. He considered leaving school to help support his family, but was encouraged to continue his education by his employers, including a white woman from the North, who sometimes lent him books from the white library. Later, when his high school became overcrowded, the white superintendent ordered the students to raise the funds for a new building themselves.

Video Oral History Interview with Frank Toland, Sr., Section A2007_102_001_003, TRT: 0:28:50 2007/03/20

Frank Toland, Sr. served as the clerk of the Bethlehem Baptist Church in Newberry, South Carolina, where he was baptized as a young man. He attended Drayton Street High School, where he played football on a corn field owned by the principal. In his first two years of high school, Toland studied bricklaying and carpentry, but became disillusioned once his class was required to work
became disillusioned once his class was required to work without pay at the white high school. Toland’s teachers encouraged him to attend college, and he was offered a scholarship to the Tuskegee Institute, although his mother forbade him from moving to Alabama because she feared for his safety in the Deep South. Instead, Toland enrolled in 1939 at the Colored Normal Industrial Agricultural and Mechanical College of South Carolina in Orangeburg, where he studied English, history and political science. He went on to teach at Wilkinson High School, and was later accepted to the University of Pennsylvania, where he was the only black graduate student in his class.

Video Oral History Interview with Frank Toland, Sr., Section A2007_102_001_004, TRT: 0:30:00 2007/03/20

Frank Toland, Sr. was barred from registering to vote in South Carolina in 1942. That same year, he was drafted into the U.S. military, where he hoped to become an adjutant general, but instead was assigned to the infantry. While stationed at Fort Dix, he wrote to the NAACP about the discriminatory conditions on the base, where white soldiers ate with the German prisoners of war, rather than the black troops. Later, Toland earned a bachelor’s degree at the Colored Normal Industrial Agricultural and Mechanical College of South Carolina, and then earned a master’s degree in history at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, while also teaching at the William Penn Business Institute. In 1949, Toland was hired as a professor of history at the Tuskegee Institute. There, he researched Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver; and, in 1950, married his wife, Maree Morse Toland, whose family had been acquainted with Carver. Toland completed his Ph.D. degree at the University of Minnesota in 1954.

Video Oral History Interview with Frank Toland, Sr., Section A2007_102_001_005, TRT: 0:29:10 2007/03/20

Frank Toland, Sr. planned to teach at the Tuskegee Institute for only one year, but remained there after meeting his wife, Maree Morse Toland. He became involved in voter registration in Tuskegee, Alabama. There, African Americans were barred from registering without a white sponsor. Toland was active with the NAACP, and taught a class on voting and politics through
the National Urban League. He also joined civic organizations like the Tuskegee Civic Association and the Macon County Democratic Club, and registered voters across the South, often travelling through all-white areas. Because of the Tuskegee Civic Association’s support for the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Toland met Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who encouraged him to commit to the nonviolent movement. In 1968, Toland was elected to Tuskegee’s city council. Later that year, after Dr. King was assassinated, Toland overheard a white shop owner mocking Dr. King’s legacy, and began a boycott of his store.