

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Terrence Roberts

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Roberts, Terrence, 1941-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Terrence Roberts,
Dates:	July 9, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:06:40).
Abstract:	Community activist Terrence Roberts (1941 -) was a member of the "Little Rock Nine." He was also the CEO of Terrence J. Roberts & Associates, a management consulting firm that focuses on equitable practices in both industry and business. Roberts was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 9, 2007, in Pasadena, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_201
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Management executive, psychology professor and "Little Rock Nine" member Dr. Terrence James Roberts was born on December 3, 1941 to William L. and Margaret G. Roberts. His father worked for the Veteran's Administration and his mother ran a catering service in Little Rock, Arkansas. Roberts attended Dunbar Junior High School in the early 1950s, and was only thirteen when the U.S. Supreme Court issued the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to integrate schools.

Roberts had begun attending Horace Mann High School when, in 1955, Little Rock School System Superintendent Virgil Blossom submitted a plan to begin gradually integrating the public schools, a proposal the school board approved unanimously. Two years later, after an intensive selection process, the *Little Rock Nine*, with Roberts among them, entered Central High School. After the white community rallied in support of segregation, Little Rock mayor Woodrow Mann asked President Eisenhower to send federal troops to enforce integration, and one day later, the President sent the 101st Airborne Division to Little Rock. Roberts endured conflicts and struggles throughout the 1957-1958 school year at Central High School. The following year, Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus and the state legislature closed the school as an attempt to oppose integration. As a result, Roberts moved to Los Angeles, California to live with his relatives, where he completed high school in 1959. In 1967, he received his B.S. degree in sociology, and then received his M.A. degree in social welfare from the University of California, Los Angeles in 1970. In 1976, he received his Ph.D. degree in psychology from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois. Roberts confronted Governor Faubus on ABC-TV's *Good Morning America* television program in 1979, where he argued that Faubus had violated the public trust in 1955 in Little Rock by pushing his segregationist policies. Roberts became the department chair of Antioch University Los Angeles' psychology program in 1994. In 1994, he again made an appearance on television when seven members of the Little Rock Nine appeared on the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, coming face to face with several Caucasian students who had tormented them.

In 1998, the Little Rock School District hired Roberts as their official desegregation consultant; to this day, Roberts provides similar services throughout the United States. The following year, President Clinton awarded Roberts the Congressional Gold Medal, the country's highest award for civilian contributions to society. Roberts is currently the chief executive officer of Terrence J. Roberts & Associates, a management consulting firm that focuses on equitable practices in both industry and business. He is married to Rita Roberts, Ph.D., and they have two daughters and two grandsons.

Terrence Roberts was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 9, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Terrence Roberts was conducted by Jacques Lesure on July 9, 2007, in Pasadena, California, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Community activist Terrence Roberts (1941 -) was a member of

the "Little Rock Nine." He was also the CEO of Terrence J. Roberts & Associates, a management consulting firm that focuses on equitable practices in both industry and business.

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:

Roberts, Terrence, 1941-

Lesure, Jacques (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Roberts, Terrence, 1941---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Little Rock Nine

Occupations:

Community Activist

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Terrence Roberts, July 9, 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 Terrence Roberts, Section
A2007_201_001_001, TRT: 0:28:10 2007/07/09

Terrence Roberts was born on December 3, 1941 in Little Rock, Arkansas to Margaret Gill Roberts and William Roberts. After Roberts' maternal grandmother died, his mother was raised by her grandmother, Elizabeth Jeter. Roberts' parents met while attending Paul Laurence Dunbar High School in Little Rock. His father became a shoemaker, and worked in the local Veteran's Administration Hospital. During World War II, he joined the U.S. Navy, although he was unable to swim. Roberts' parents raised seven children, including Roberts, in segregated Little Rock. There, Roberts frequented the Dunbar Community Center, and attended Gibbs Elementary School and later Paul Laurence Dunbar Junior High School. He admired professional athletes Sidney Williams, Jr. and Jim Pace, both of whom were alumni of Little Rock's Paul Laurence Dunbar High School. Despite the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in favor of school integration in 1954, Roberts entered the

segregated Horace Mann High School in 1956.

African American children--Arkansas.

African American families--Arkansas.

African American school children.

African Americans--Segregation--Arkansas--Little Rock.

Central High School (Little Rock, Ark.).

African American neighborhoods--Arkansas--Little Rock.

Video Oral History Interview with Terrence Roberts, Section
A2007_201_001_002, TRT: 0:30:10 2007/07/09

Terrence Roberts was one of 150 African American students who volunteered to desegregate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957. Under pressure from local whites, the school board created a screening process for the students, but the NAACP intervened to prevent the board from eliminating every candidate. Despite fear of white reprisals, Roberts' parents supported his decision to be one of the nine remaining students, known as the Little Rock Nine. At the start of the academic term, Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus sent the National Guard to keep the Little Rock Nine from entering Central High School. After three weeks, President Dwight David "Ike" Eisenhower federalized the guard; ordered the police to protect the black students; and, finally, sent the 101st Airborne Division as their escort. At the school, the Little Rock Nine faced abuse from their white peers and teachers, but remained nonviolent, as advised by Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., James Lawson and Glenn E. Smiley.

Central High School (Little Rock, Ark.)--Riots & demonstrations--1950-1960.

Segregation in education--Arkansas.

United States. Army. Airborne Division, 101st.

Race riots--Arkansas

Race relations—Arkansas—Little Rock.

Video Oral History Interview with Terrence Roberts, Section
A2007_201_001_003, TRT: 0:29:00 2007/07/09

Terrence Roberts and the Little Rock Nine learned nonviolence from activists James Lawson, Glenn E.

Smiley and Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at the home of NAACP chapter president Daisy Bates. After their first year at Central High School, Governor Orval Faubus closed Arkansas' public schools to avoid integration, and Roberts moved to Los Angeles, California to complete his education at Los Angeles High School. From 1959, he attended the University of California, Los Angeles, and then transferred to the Los Angeles State College of Applied Arts and Sciences. After serving as a social worker, Roberts taught at Southern Illinois University while completing a Ph.D. degree in psychology. In 1976, Roberts returned to California to become the director of the mental health program at St. Helena Hospital and Health Center. In 1979, he was invited to appear on 'Good Morning America' with Governor Faubus. Afterwards, a former classmate contacted Roberts to apologize for his mistreatment.

King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968.

Nonviolence--Philosophy.

Faubus, Orval Eugene, 1910-1994.

Segregation in education--Arkansas--Little Rock.

Central High School (Little Rock, Ark.).

Racism in education--California--Los Angeles.

African American college students--California.

Desegregation in education--Arkansas--Little Rock.

Video Oral History Interview with Terrence Roberts, Section
A2007_201_001_004, TRT: 0:29:20 2007/07/09

Terrence Roberts became an assistant dean at the University of California, Los Angeles in 1985, and was named the chairman of the psychology department at Antioch University Los Angeles in 1994. In the early 2000s, he retired from administrative work to serve solely as an instructor. The Little Rock Nine appeared on 'The Oprah Winfrey Show' in 1996, alongside their white peers from Central High School. The Little Rock School District continued to resist integration, and Roberts implemented a training program there in 1999. The following year, the Little Rock Nine were each awarded the Congressional Gold Medal. At the time of the interview, Roberts planned

to publish a book about his time in Little Rock. He reflects upon his spirituality, and his education at segregated schools. He also talks about racial discrimination at the time of the interview, and his hopes for the African American community. Roberts concludes the interview by describing how he would like to be remembered.

Oprah Winfrey show (Television program).

Congressional Award.

Racism in education--Arkansas--Little Rock.

Desegregation in education--Arkansas--Little Rock.

Video Oral History Interview with Terrence Roberts, Section
A2007_201_001_005, TRT: 0:10:00 2007/07/09

Terrence Roberts narrates his photographs.