

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Albert Edwards

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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>	Edwards, Albert, 1937-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Albert Edwards,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 10, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:52:23).
<b>Abstract:</b>	State representative The Honorable Albert Edwards (1937 - 2020) served in the Texas state legislature for twenty-eight years representing District 146. He also initiated the passing of the bill to recognize Juneteenth Day in Texas. Edwards was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 10, 2007, in Houston, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_230
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

State Representative, Hon. Albert Ely Edwards was born in Houston, Texas on March 19, 1937. Edwards is the sixth child out of the sixteen children born to Reverend E. L. Edwards, Sr. and Josephine Radford Edwards. He graduated from Phyllis Wheatley High School and attended Texas Southern University, earning his B.A. degree in 1966.

At the age of forty-one, Edwards entered politics and was elected to the Texas State Legislature from Houston's House District 146. His first major goal was to ensure the establishment of a holiday that recognized the emancipation of slavery. In 1979, legislation recognizing Juneteenth Day, initiated by Edwards, passed the Texas State Legislature and was signed into law. Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day or Emancipation Day, is an annual holiday in fourteen states of the United States. Celebrated on June 19th, it commemorates the announcement of the abolition of slavery in Texas. While serving in the legislature, Edwards also founded his own real estate company.

Though deeply involved with local issues, Edwards remained active in many issues outside the Texas State Legislature. In 1983, Edwards was appointed as a member of the board of Operation PUSH. Edwards also served as the Texas State Director of Reverend Jesse Jackson's two presidential campaigns in 1984 and 1988. In 1986, Edwards also founded Operation Justus, a community faith-based organization that serves as a referral service for persons with social problems and concerns. Edwards was also arrested in Houston and went to jail for peacefully demonstrating against apartheid in South Africa in 1987. Edwards left the Texas legislature in 2007 after twenty-eight years of serving the people of District 146. As a veteran member of the Texas Legislature, Edwards served on three influential committees. He was the Chairman of the Rules and Resolutions Committee, Chairman of Budget and Oversight of the Ways and Means Committee and a member of the Appropriations Committee.

Albert Edwards was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 10, 2007.

Edwards passed away on April 29, 2020.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Albert Edwards was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 10, 2007, in Houston, Texas, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. State representative The Honorable Albert Edwards (1937 - 2020) served in the Texas state legislature for twenty-eight years representing District 146. He also initiated the passing of the bill to recognize Juneteenth Day in Texas.

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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:

Edwards, Albert, 1937-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Edwards, Albert, 1937---Interviews

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African American politicians--Interviews

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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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Texas

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# Occupations:

State Representative

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# HistoryMakers® Category:

PoliticalMakers

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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 The Honorable Albert Edwards, August 10, 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 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).

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# 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 The Honorable Albert Edwards, Section A2007\_230\_001\_001,  
TRT: 0:29:30 ?

The Honorable Albert Edwards was born on June 19, 1937 in Houston, Texas to Josephine Radford Edwards and Eldridge Edwards. His maternal grandfather, Frank Radford, was of mixed race, and had a small farm in rural Polk County, Texas. Edwards' mother was born in 1911, and graduated from Yates Colored High School in Houston. There, his maternal grandmother, Eugenia Marshall Radford, helped to found the South Main Baptist Church, where the pastor was Edwards' paternal grandfather, Redick Edwards. Edwards' father was born in Houston in 1912, and met his mother at South Main Baptist Church. His father worked as a minister and real estate broker, served as the treasurer of the Baptist Ministers Association, and belonged to Houston's NAACP chapter. Edwards grew up in the Trinity Gardens neighborhood of Houston, which was segregated at the time. Later in life, he participated in sit-ins to integrate the lunch counters at Houston's J. Weingarten, Inc. and Walgreens Company stores.

African American families--Texas--Houston.

Juneteenth--Texas--Houston.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Albert Edwards, Section A2007\_230\_001\_002,  
TRT: 0:29:32 ?

The Honorable Albert Edwards grew up in Houston, Texas, where he frequented the swimming holes during the summers, and visited the Playland Park every Juneteenth, as this was the only day black children were allowed to attend. In Houston, Edwards attended Trinity Gardens Elementary School. He once skipped class during the fourth grade, but was caught by his father, Eldridge Edwards, and received a whipping in front of his classmates. He recalls his parents' belief in corporal punishment, and its influence on him and his siblings. Edwards continued his education at Houston's E.O. Smith Middle School. While a student there, he worked as a grocery clerk, and as a handyman for his neighbor. He went on to attend Phillis Wheatley High School, where he belonged to several all-boys' clubs. Upon graduation, Edwards worked at the Maxwell House Coffee Company plant, and as a waiter at the Petroleum Club of Houston and The Houston Club.

African American families--Texas--Houston.

African American children--Texas.

African American high school students--Texas--Houston.

Prayer in the public schools--Law and legislation--United States.

Education, Higher.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Albert Edwards, Section A2007\_230\_001\_003,  
TRT: 0:30:20 ?

The Honorable Albert Edwards graduated in 1955 from Phillis Wheatley High School in Houston, Texas. With the encouragement of his parents, he enrolled at Houston's Texas Southern University, where he majored in physical education, and took up tennis and bowling. His mentors included professors David Rains and Edward Pershing Norris, Sr., who placed Edwards on academic probation for poor grades on several occasions. In Houston, Edwards was introduced to the Civil Rights Movement through the church, as his father belonged to the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. He marched with Reverend Bill Lawson, and participated in sit-ins at the F.W. Woolworth Company lunch counters. Edwards talks about the leaders of Houston's Civil Rights Movement, like attorney Francis Williams, Congressman Mickey Leland, Reverend C. Anderson Davis and activist Ovide Duncantell; and describes their

accomplishments, which included integrating the county courthouse, and closing the Holmes Road dump in Houston's Sunnyside community.

African American college students.

Civil rights demonstrations--Alabama.

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Texas Southern University.

African Americans--History--Study and teaching.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Albert Edwards, Section A2007\_230\_001\_004,  
TRT: 0:31:10 ?

The Honorable Albert Edwards improved his grades at Texas Southern University, and graduated with a degree in physical education in 1966. He then completed a physical therapy program at the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama. Upon returning to Houston, Edwards worked as a lift truck operator at the Maxwell House Coffee Company plant. Management refused to promote qualified African Americans, so Edwards filed suit with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and advanced to a sales position. He later worked in sales at Post Cereals. In 1978, with the support of Congressman Mickey Leland, Edwards was elected to the Texas Legislature, succeeding Anthony W. Hall, Jr. His district included the Sunnyside and South Park communities, and the neighboring areas on Houston's south end. Early in his tenure, Edwards campaigned to strengthen the black history requirements in the Texas school curriculum. Later, in 2004, he organized a campaign to ensure voting rights for Prairie View A&M University students.

Education, Higher.

Discrimination in employment

Texas Southern University

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Albert Edwards, Section A2007\_230\_001\_005,  
TRT: 0:30:00 ?

The Honorable Albert Edwards introduced a bill to the Texas Legislature in 1979 to recognize Juneteenth as a state holiday. With only fourteen black members of the legislature, Edwards' bill faced steep opposition. Even so, he negotiated with conservative white legislators like Bill Hollowell, William T. Moore and Walter Mengden, and the bill was signed into law by Governor Bill Clements. Edwards also established a Juneteenth historical commission in 1997, and installed a monument at the Ashton Villa in Galveston, Texas. During his legislative tenure, Edwards sponsored efforts to commemorate Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday as a state holiday, and supported bills to expand children's health insurance coverage and reinstitute school prayer. He recalls President George Walker Bush, whom he befriended in the Texas Legislature, and later opposed during the Iraq War; and U.S. Representative Barbara Jordan, who was among Edwards' classmates at Phillis Wheatley High School in Houston, Texas.

Emancipation Proclamation

Juneteenth--Texas

Liberty--History--19th century

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Albert Edwards, Section A2007\_230\_001\_006,  
TRT: 0:21:51 ?

The Honorable Albert Edwards supported a bill in the Texas Legislature to guarantee all high school graduates' admission to Texas Southern University in

Houston, Texas. He worked on this initiative with college administrators like Glenn O. Lewis and Priscilla Slade. Additionally, Edwards collaborated with Texas State Representative Sylvester Turner to eliminate prison sentences for minor drug-related offenses, in order to reduce the mass incarceration of black youth. Edwards describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community, as well as his plans for the future, which included advancing legislation to make Juneteenth a national holiday. He reflects upon his life, legacy and family, and concludes the interview by describing how he would like to be remembered.

Texas Southern University.

African Americans--Social conditions.

African American prisoners--Social conditions.

AIDS (Disease).