



Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Hon. Jock Smith

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Hon. Jock Smith
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Hon. Jock Smith,
Dates:	September 5, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	8 Betacam SP videocassettes (3:33:55).
Abstract:	Attorney, law professor, and municipal court judge Hon. Jock Smith (1948 -) is senior partner at Cochran, Cherry, Givens & Smith, P.C. in Tuskegee, Alabama. He is a former judge for the State of Alabama and wrote his autobiography entitled "Climbing Jacob's Ladder: a Trial Lawyer's Journey in Behalf of the 'Least of These'." Smith was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 5, 2007, in Montgomery, Alabama. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_245
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Attorney, law professor, municipal court judge, and trial lawyer Jock Michael Smith was born on June 10, 1948, in New York City to Betty Lou Nance Bowers and Jacob Smith. Despite the untimely death of his father in 1956, Smith still excelled academically, receiving his B.S. degree from Tuskegee University in 1970 and his J.D. degree from the University of Notre Dame's Law School on May 20, 1973.

After receiving his law degree, Smith then became a legal advisor to the NAACP's Civil Rights Project in Broome County, New York. A year later, Smith moved to Alabama, and in 1977, he became the assistant attorney general for Montgomery, Alabama. That same year, Smith opened his own law firm in Tuskegee, Alabama where he represented plaintiffs and defendants in both criminal and civil suits until 1998. In 1987, Smith became a city municipal judge in Camp Hill, Alabama, and spent two years on the bench. In 1990, he became County Attorney in Macon County, Alabama. He represented the county in all legal matters for fifteen years. In 1993, Smith worked as an administrative law judge for Alabama's Department of Environmental Management. The following year, he founded Scoring For Life, Inc., a non-profit organization that encourages teens, children and adults with motivational messages. In 1997, Smith became a principal stockholder and sports agent for Cochran Sports Management while working alongside Johnnie L. Cochran Jr. A year later, Smith joined Cochran at the firm of Cochran, Cherry, Givens & Smith, P.C. in Tuskegee, Alabama as a senior partner. In 1999, he also became a play-by-play announcer for Tuskegee University's Tiger Football and the Tuskegee Community Network. In addition to his legal career, Smith also taught at State University of New York at Binghamton and Tuskegee Institute.

Smith has received numerous awards, including honorary doctorates of Divinity Degrees from the Pentecostal

Bible College, Tuskegee, Alabama and the Montgomery Bible Institute and Theological Center, Montgomery, Alabama, and keys to the cities of New Orleans, Louisiana, Memphis, Tennessee and Flint, Michigan. He has been recognized by the Alabama Trial Lawyers Association for tireless dedication and unwavering commitment, inducted into the Million Dollar Advocates Forum and received the Inaugural Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr. Journey to Justice Award in 2005 at the National Bar Association Convention. "The Martindale-Hubbell" legal publication has given Smith its highest rating, the AV Rating, and "Lawdragon" Legal Magazine in Los Angeles, California selected him as one of America's Top 500 Trial Litigators in 2006 and 2007. Smith was inducted onto the President's Advisory Council of the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), making him the first African American to serve on that board. In 2002, he published his autobiography entitled, "Climbing Jacob's ladder: a Trial Lawyer's Journey in Behalf of the 'Least of These'."

Jock Micheal Smith was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on September 5, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Hon. Jock Smith was conducted by Denise Gines on September 5, 2007, in Montgomery, Alabama, and was recorded on 8 Betacam SP videocassettes. County attorney, law professor, and municipal court judge Hon. Jock Smith (1948 -) is senior partner at Cochran, Cherry, Givens & Smith, P.C. in Tuskegee, Alabama. He is a former judge for the State of Alabama and wrote his autobiography entitled "Climbing Jacob's ladder: a Trial Lawyer's Journey in Behalf of the 'Least of These'."

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:

Smith, Jock M., 1948-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Smith, Jock M., 1948---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Macon County (Ala.)

Camp Hill (Ala.)

HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers

EducationMakers

LawMakers

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 Hon. Jock Smith, September 5, 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 8/25/2011 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, September 5, 2007

Video Oral History Interview with Hon. Jock Smith, Section A2007_245_001_001, TRT: 0:29:10
2007/09/05

Jock Smith slates the interview and gives a brief history of his family. He discusses important influences in his life, and talks about the murder of his father. Smith has very fond memories of his father and notes the different things he learned from him while he was alive. He also remembers watching the 1955 World Series, and says why his father said the Dodgers' victory was important to race relations in the United States. Smith briefly mentions visiting his family in Kansas City, Kansas.

World Series (Baseball) (1955).

African American families--New York--United States.

Race Relations--United States.

Brooklyn Dodgers (Baseball team)--History.

Robinson, Jackie, 1919-1972.

Video Oral History Interview with Hon. Jock Smith, Section A2007_245_001_002, TRT: 0:28:00
2007/09/05

Jock Smith discusses his family history and the role education played. His father attended law school after he served in World War II as a Buffalo Soldier. While in law school, Jacob Smith worked as a waiter at the Forest Hill Inn Hotel in New York. Jock talks about some of his memories about his father, like playing baseball with him in the empty lot by their house. Smith also reminisces about his parents and the importance of religion in their lives. He recalls his experiences in elementary school and some of the extracurricular activities he participated in with his friends.

African Americans--Education ,Higher.

African American lawyers--New York (State).

African Americans--Religion.

African American couples.

World War, 1939-1945.

United States. Army. Infantry Regiment, 24th (1869-1951)

Video Oral History Interview with Hon. Jock Smith, Section A2007_245_001_003, TRT: 0:29:40
2007/09/05

Jock Smith remembers his experiences while he was in school. He recalls being told that he was not good enough to succeed, although he had a gift for public speaking. Smith became involved with black power movement while attending Tuskegee University. He also planned events while on student government. There was a lot of activism on the campus, and he remembers an incident where members of the student government from a previous year locked the

board of trustees in a building in hopes of having their demands met. This protest resulted in the National Guard being called to Tuskegee to put down the unrest. Smith also talks about his experience with the draft board in 1969 and the march he led against the Vietnam War. Smith also recalls some of the talented students who attended Tuskegee with him, like Tom Joyner, Lionel Richie, and the Commodores.

Students--Tuskegee University.

Black power--Alabama--United States--History--20th century

African Americans--Education (elementary)--New York(State)--New York.

Vietnam War, 1961-1975.

Civil rights movements--Alabama--Tuskegee--History--20th century.

Tuskegee University.

Video Oral History Interview with Hon. Jock Smith, Section A2007_245_001_004, TRT: 0:29:00
2007/09/05

Jock Smith remembers wanting to excel in college and become a lawyer like his father. He remembers the organizations he joined, participating in athletics, and Gwendolyn Patton's term as student body president at Tuskegee University. Smith describes his struggles his first two years of law school at Notre Dame as well as the racist atmosphere at Notre Dame. Smith also discusses some of his early jobs, like working in the Domino Sugar factory in Brooklyn, New York.

African American college athletes--Tuskegee University.

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity.

African American students--Norte Dame College of Law.

Racism--Indiana.

African American lawyers.

Video Oral History Interview with Hon. Jock Smith, Section A2007_245_001_005, TRT: 0:28:30
2007/09/05

Jock Smith describes the cases he won in his early years in private practice; "Turner v. Southern Life and Health Insurance Company," which yielded the largest civil case settlement won by an African American lawyer in the country, and "State of Alabama vs. Donell Williams," a racially motivated rape case. Smith talks about his religious experiences, and how he met Jonnie Cochran, who came to Alabama for a book signing.

Actions and defenses--Insurance Comp--Alabama.

Cochran, Jonnie, L. 1937-2005

African American Lawyers--Alabama.

African Americans--Religion.

Video Oral History Interview with Hon. Jock Smith, Section A2007_245_001_006, TRT: 0:30:05
2007/09/05

Jock Smith discusses his partnership with Johnnie Cochran and Keith Givens, the formation of Cochran Cherry Givens and Smith law firm, and some of their more memorable cases won under this firm; an environmental case won for a small Alabama town, and his representation of an elderly woman's family cheated by a pest control company. He also describes meeting his wife, Yvette, at the Alabama Democratic convention in 1978.

Actions and defenses--Alabama.

African American couples--Alabama.

Cochran, Johnnie L. 1937-2005.

African American lawyers--Alabama.

African American lawyers.

Video Oral History Interview with Hon. Jock Smith, Section A2007_245_001_007, TRT: 0:28:30
2007/09/05

Jock Smith talks about the influences of his wife and the pride he feels towards his daughter, who is both an engineer and a lawyer. He is concerned about the lack of initiative among African American youth today. He talks about his autobiography, "Climbing Jacob's Ladder: A Trial Lawyer's Journey on Behalf of 'The Least of These,'" his extensive sports memorabilia collection and the role sports played in the fight for integration.

Sports collectibles.

Discrimination in sports.

African American families--Alabama.

African American lawyers--United States--Biography.

African American fathers--Alabama.

African American couples--Alabama.

Video Oral History Interview with Hon. Jock Smith, Section A2007_245_001_008, TRT: 0:11:00
2007/09/05

Jock Smith narrates some family photographs.