

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Charles Walker

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## Overview of the Collection

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| <b>Repository:</b>           | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com   |
| <b>Creator:</b>              | Walker, Charles E., 1951-  |
| <b>Title:</b>                | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Charles Walker,   |
| <b>Dates:</b>                | September 10, 2007 and September 12, 2007  |
| <b>Bulk Dates:</b>           | 2007   |
| <b>Physical Description:</b> | 8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:23:38).  |
| <b>Abstract:</b>             | State administrative judge and state assistant attorney general The Honorable Charles Walker (1951 - ) received several awards over his career, including the Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly magazine's "Top Ten Lawyers of the Year" in 1997, and the 75th Anniversary Distinguished Alumnus Award from Boston College Law School's Alumni Association. Walker was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 10, 2007 and September 12, 2007, in Boston, Massachusetts. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| <b>Identification:</b>       | A2007_251  |
| <b>Language:</b>             | The interview and records are in English.  |

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Attorney Charles Edward Walker, Jr., was born on May 1, 1951, in Anchorage, Alaska, to Marguerite Pearl Lee and Colonel Charles E. Walker, Sr. Walker received his B.A. degree in political science from the University of California, Santa Barbara, in 1973 and his J.D. degree from Boston College Law School in 1978.

In 1974, Walker began working as an English teacher for the Oxnard Union High School District in Oxnard, California. After leaving the school district in 1975, Walker studied at the London School of Economics, where he earned his B.S. degree in 1977. After returning to the United States, Walker moved to Massachusetts and worked as an attorney for the Department of Agriculture Office of General Counsel. He then served as a law clerk under the Honorable James Lynch for the Boston Superior Court until 1980.

After leaving the Boston Superior Court, Walker worked as a law clerk at the Massachusetts Court of Appeals for the Honorable Frederick L. Brown, who was the first African American to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals in Massachusetts. Walker resigned from this position in 1981 and began working as a teaching fellow for Suffolk University Law School's Council on Legal Education Opportunity, while at the same time serving as an instructor at the University of Massachusetts. Shortly thereafter, Walker began working as the Assistant Attorney General for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts under then Attorney General Francis X. Bellotti. There, Walker defended state agencies and officials in all the state and federal trial and appellate courts of Massachusetts.

After leaving the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1987, Walker worked briefly as an assistant professor at the New England School of Law, before beginning a six year tenure as the Chairman of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD), which ended in 1998. In 2000, Walker served as an administrative judge with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Department of Industrial Accidents, where he completed a four year term ending on September 20, 2004.

Walker has received several awards for his success in the legal arena, including the *Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly's* "Top Ten Lawyers of the Year" in 1997 and the 75th Anniversary Distinguished Alumnus Award from Boston College Law School's Alumni Association.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Charles Walker was conducted by Larry Crowe on September 10, 2007 and September 12, 2007, in Boston, Massachusetts, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. State administrative judge and state assistant attorney general The Honorable Charles Walker (1951 - ) received several awards over his career, including the Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly magazine's "Top Ten Lawyers of the Year" in

## 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:

Walker, Charles E., 1951-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

## **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews  
Walker, Charles E., 1951---Interviews

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African American lawyers--Interviews

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African American judges--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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Massachusetts

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Massachusetts

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## **Occupations:**

State Administrative Judge

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State Assistant Attorney General

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

LawMakers

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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 Charles Walker, September 10, 2007 and September 12, 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).

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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 Charles Walker,  
Section A2007\_251\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:19 2007/09/10

The Honorable Charles Walker was born on May 1, 1951 in Anchorage, Alaska to Marguerite Lee Walker and Charles E. Walker. His mother was born in Columbus, Ohio to Beulah Price and Homer P. Lee, who worked for General Electric, and owned a farm in Gahanna, Ohio, where Walker visited as a child. Walker's maternal grandmother worked as a cook and maid at a brothel, and went on to own a successful catering company, serving

politicians like President Richard Nixon. Shortly after graduating from Paul Laurence Dunbar High School in Dayton, Ohio, Walker's mother met his father on a U.S. Air Force base. Walker's father, a Tuskegee Airman, was born in 1919 in Arkansas to Jane Ealy Walker and railroad worker Charles A. Walker. His family moved to Jackson, Michigan, where Walker's paternal grandmother raised six children on her own, including Walker's paternal aunt, Pearl Walker McNeil, who was among the first African American women to earn a Ph.D. degree in anthropology.

African American lawyers--Interviews.

African American judges--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Charles Walker, Section A2007\_251\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:59 2007/09/10

The Honorable Charles Walker's aunt, Pearl Walker McNeil, earned a Ph.D. degree in anthropology from Washington, D.C.'s American University in 1979, and married Jesse Jai McNeil, who pastored the Tabernacle Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan. Walker's father, Charles E. Walker, studied music at Michigan State Normal College in Ypsilanti, Michigan, and then became a Tuskegee Airman in the U.S. Air Force. During his military career, he became one of the first black Air Force base commanders, and met U.S. Air Force General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. and NAACP leader Roy Wilkins. Later, he served as a flight instructor. Walker began his education in Nashville, Tennessee, and continued on the Toul-Rosières Air Base in France, where his father was stationed. After his father's transfer to Camarillo, California, Walker attended Adolfo Camarillo High School, where he became the first black student body president, in addition to running track and playing football. Walker also talks about his sister, Chelley Dean Litman.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Charles Walker, Section A2007\_251\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:39 2007/09/10

The Honorable Charles Walker served a term as the student body vice president of Adolfo Camarillo High School in Camarillo, California. In this capacity, he led a protest against a presidential campaign rally for Alabama

Governor George Wallace at Simi Valley High School. Upon graduating in 1969, Walker majored in art at Moorpark College in Moorpark, California. He admired cartoonists Johnny Hart, Paul Coker, Jr. and Jeff MacNelly, and began drawing comic strips for his school, as well as Santa Barbara City College. During this time, he met Peanuts comic strip creator Charles M. Schulz, who complimented his work. Walker also performed as a standup comedian in Los Angeles, where he opened for Chaka Khan and Rufus at the Shrine Auditorium, and met comedians David Brenner, Freddie Prinze, Sr. and Jimmie Walker while performing at comedy clubs. In 1970, Walker joined the Church of God in Christ. He also transferred to the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he focused more on his education.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Charles Walker,  
Section A2007\_251\_001\_004, TRT: 0:17:50 2007/09/10

The Honorable Charles Walker's father, Charles E. Walker, brought him to services at a Methodist church when he was a child. His paternal uncle, Jesse Jai McNeil, was a Baptist pastor, a member of the SCLC and a good friend of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In 1970, Walker's friend, Pastor David G. Moore, influenced him to join the Church of God in Christ in Los Angeles, California. At that time, Walker was in college, and regularly performed as a standup comedian. He graduated from the University of California, Santa Barbara in 1973; and, for one year, worked as an investigator for District Attorney C. Stanley Trom's office in Oxnard, California. Then, he taught English to high school students, while preparing to take the LSAT examination. Walker was accepted to the Boston College Law School in Newton Centre, Massachusetts, where he met Reverend Robert Franklin, and adjusted to the culture of the East Coast.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Charles Walker,  
Section A2007\_251\_002\_005, TRT: 0:28:37 2007/09/12

The Honorable Charles Walker was one of twenty-two African American students in his graduating class at the Boston College Law School, where he was mentored by Dean Richard G. Huber. Upon graduating, he planned to become an entertainment lawyer, while also pursuing his

dream of becoming a cartoonist and standup comedian. Instead, he clerked for appellate judge Frederick L. Brown and Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Superior Court James P. Lynch, Jr., and then became an assistant attorney general in the office of Massachusetts Attorney General Francis X. Bellotti. There, he assisted fellow lawyer Craig R. Browne with a racial discrimination case against Houlihan's Old Place in Boston, Massachusetts. Walker went on to serve on the board of the Roxbury Defenders Committee, which was the first black-owned indigent criminal defense law office. He also taught at the New England School of Law and Suffolk University Law School, and was the associate editor of the Massachusetts Law Review in 1990.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Charles Walker,  
Section A2007\_251\_002\_006, TRT: 0:29:00 2007/09/12

The Honorable Charles Walker became the commissioner of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) in 1994. His inauguration was officiated by law professor Charles Ogletree at the African Meeting House in Boston, Massachusetts. In 2000, Walker successfully represented MCAD in a case against Tom English's Cottage, a pub in Boston that had created a racist Black History Month display. The bar owner was ordered to issue a public apology, sponsor an essay contest for the local schools and host a community forum about racism at the African Meeting House, which was moderated by historians James O. Horton and Thomas H. O'Connor. That same year, Walker was promoted to chairman of MCAD, and upheld the \$300,000 judgment in the case of Lule Said v. Northeast Security, Inc. in favor of Said, who had endured religious discrimination in the workplace. During his tenure at MCAD, Walker developed a reputation as a supporter of minority rights, and sometimes received death threats.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Charles Walker,  
Section A2007\_251\_002\_007, TRT: 0:28:44 2007/09/12

The Honorable Charles Walker left the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination to become an administrative judge for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. He was first appointed by Governor



William F. Weld, and then reappointed by Governor Paul Cellucci. Walker served as a judge for four years; and then, in 2005, became the executive director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice. In 2007, he joined Governor Deval L. Patrick's administration as general counsel and deputy director of enforcement for the Division of Professional Licensure. In addition, Walker published a series of articles in the Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly journal about black attorneys John J. Smith, John S. Rock and Robert Morris, Sr. Inspired by his research, Walker and the Massachusetts Black Lawyers Association hosted a reenactment of the swearing-in of Macon Bolling Allen, the first black lawyer in the United States. Walker also talks about his aspirations to write a book, screenplay and syndicated cartoon.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Charles Walker,  
Section A2007\_251\_002\_008, TRT: 0:11:30 2007/09/12

The Honorable Charles Walker talks about his hopes for the African American community; and his family, including his daughters Sydney Walker and Courtney Walker. He also reflects upon his career and legacy, and concludes the interview by describing how he would like to be remembered.