

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Kurt Schmoke

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Schmoke, Kurt L.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Kurt Schmoke,
Dates:	September 25, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	3 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:27:17).
Abstract:	Academic administrator, city attorney, and mayor The Honorable Kurt Schmoke (1949 -) was elected Baltimore, Maryland's first African American mayor in 1987 after serving four years as state's attorney. He served as mayor until 1998. Schmoke was Dean of the Howard University School of Law. Schmoke was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 25, 2007, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_271
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Mayor, city attorney, and academic administrator Hon. Kurt L. Schmoke was born on December 1, 1949 in Baltimore, Maryland, the only child of Irene and Murray Schmoke. College-educated, Murray Schmoke was a chemist while Irene was a social worker. Schmoke attended Baltimore City College, a public high school, where he was the quarterback of the school's state champion football team. Schmoke's parents and pastor, Marion Bascom of the Douglas Memorial Community Church, encouraged his academic career. Schmoke was also mentored by Baltimore Judge Robert Hammerman, who asked him to join the Lancers Boys Club, a youth organization that Hammerman ran in his spare time.

Schmoke attended Yale University, where he continued to excel in school and athletics, and was chosen to represent the student body during the turmoil that surrounded the 1970 trial of Black Panther Bobby Seale. Schmoke graduated with his B.A. degree in history in 1971, after which he was selected for a Rhodes Scholarship. He studied at Oxford University in England for two years, traveling throughout Europe and Africa in his free time. Schmoke attended Harvard Law School, graduating with his J.D. degree in 1976. While in law school, he met and married Baltimore native and ophthalmologist Patricia Locks. The couple has two children, Gregory and Katherine.

After passing the Maryland Bar Examination, Schmoke joined the prominent law firm of Piper & Marbury, where he worked for less than two years before being recruited by the Carter Administration to work as assistant director under Stuart Eizenstat on the White House Domestic Policy Staff. Schmoke, however, decided to return to public service in Baltimore as an Assistant United States Attorney in 1978. Four years later, he successfully ran for State's Attorney, Baltimore's chief prosecuting officer.

In 1987, Schmoke became the first elected African American mayor of the City of Baltimore. Schmoke was re-

elected to his second term with more than 70% of the vote in 1991. As mayor, Schmoke developed a reputation for his pioneering approaches to the problems of urban America. During his time in office, he instituted needle-exchange programs for drug addicts, attracted a new football team to the city and promoted citywide reading. President George Bush awarded him the 1992 National Literacy Award for his efforts to promote adult literacy. Two years later, President Bill Clinton praised his programs to improve public housing and to enhance community economic development. In 1999, Schmoke elected not to run for a fourth term and was succeeded by Martin O'Malley. From 2000 to 2002, he was a partner in the law offices of Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering in Baltimore. Schmoke is the Dean of Howard University's School of Law, a position he assumed in 2003. Schmoke is on the board of directors of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Children's Health Forum, Foundation for the National Institutes of Health, Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Legg Mason, Inc. and McGraw-Hill Companies.

Hon. Kurt Schmoke was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on September 25, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Kurt Schmoke was conducted by Cheryl Butler on September 25, 2007, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 3 Betacame SP videocassettes. Academic administrator, city attorney, and mayor The Honorable Kurt Schmoke (1949 -) was elected Baltimore, Maryland's first African American mayor in 1987 after serving four years as state's attorney. He served as mayor until 1998. Schmoke was Dean of the Howard University School of Law.

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:

Schmoke, Kurt L.

Butler, Cheryl (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Schmoke, Kurt L.--Interviews

African American mayors—Maryland—Baltimore—Interviews

African American lawyers—Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

University of Baltimore

Baltimore (Md.). State's Attorney

Baltimore (Md.). Mayor

Occupations:

University President

City Attorney

Mayor

HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers|LawMakers|PoliticalMakers

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 Kurt Schmoke, September 25, 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).

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 The Honorable Kurt Schmoke, Section A2007_271_001_001, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

The Honorable Kurt Schmoke was born on December 1, 1949 in Baltimore, Maryland to Irene Bennett Reid and Murray Alexander Schmoke, Sr. His maternal grandparents, music teacher Fannie Ross Bennett and traveling salesman Fred Bennett, settled in Albany, Georgia; while his paternal grandparents, day laborer Pearl Johnson Schmoke and carpenter John Schmoke, raised their family in Raleigh, North Carolina. Schmoke's father graduated from Morehouse College, and his mother studied social work at Spelman College. They met and married in Atlanta, Georgia, and then moved to Baltimore, Maryland, where his father worked as a weapons research chemist at the Aberdeen Proving Ground, and his mother studied at Morgan State College, later joining the Baltimore City Department of Social Services. In Baltimore, Schmoke's family attended Douglas Memorial Community Church. His parents divorced when he was twelve years old, and his mother later married African Methodist Episcopal Bishop Frank M. Reid, Jr.

African American families--Maryland--Baltimore.

School integration--Maryland--Baltimore.

Race awareness--Maryland--Baltimore.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Kurt Schmoke, Section A2007_271_001_002, TRT: 0:28:21 ?

The Honorable Kurt Schmoke grew up in an all-black neighborhood in Baltimore, Maryland. He began his education in 1955 at the recently integrated Gwynns Falls Elementary School, which later became predominantly black. At eight years old, Schmoke met Baltimore Mayor Theodore R. McKeldin, and came to aspire to serve as mayor himself. In the sixth grade, he was influenced by his teacher, Sarah Taylor, who held class debates about the political issues of the time, such as the presidential election of 1960, and communist China's membership in the United Nations. During the seventh and eighth grades, Schmoke was bused to the predominantly white Garrison Junior High School.

From 1964, he attended an all-boys, integrated high school called Baltimore City College; where, as the quarterback of the football team, he helped win the high school championship game. He was influenced by his football coach, George B. Young, who emphasized academics, and helped Schmoke prepare to attend college.

Baltimore City Public Schools.

Educators--Maryland--Baltimore.

Public education—Maryland—Baltimore.

Debates and debating.

African American teachers.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Kurt Schmoke, Section A2007_271_001_003, TRT: 0:29:56 ?

The Honorable Kurt Schmoke was one of two black students in the college preparatory program at his high school, Baltimore City College. While there, he joined the Lancers, a mostly Jewish boys' club led by Judge Robert I.H. Hammerman. With the Lancers, he attended lectures by community leaders like Congressman Charles L. Weltner, as well as a debate with the head of Maryland's Ku Klux Klan. During his senior year, Schmoke was elected president of his class, and was encouraged by football player Calvin G. Hill to attend Yale University, where he matriculated in 1967. During his studies, Schmoke learned about the lack of childcare support for the university staff; and, during the trial of Black Panther Party member Bobby Seale in 1970, turned his dormitory into a temporary daycare for the demonstrators' children. He later founded the Calvin Hill Daycare Center/Kitty-Lustman Kindergarten. Schmoke also talks about leadership of Yale University's president, Kingman Brewster, Jr.

Civil rights movements--United States.

Kennedy, John F. (John Fitzgerald), 1917-1963.

Boys--Societies and clubs--Maryland--Baltimore.

Seale, Bobby--1936--Trials, litigation, etc.

Hill, Calvin.

Black Panther Party.

Yale University.