



# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Freeman Bosley

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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>	Freeman Bosley
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Freeman Bosley,
<b>Dates:</b>	October 15, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Betacam SP videocassettes (3:21:00).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Mayor and lawyer Freeman Bosley (1954 - ) was the first African American mayor of the City of St. Louis. He was also the first African American Circuit Clerk of Courts for the 22nd Judicial Circuit of St. Louis. He currently heads his own law firm, Bosley & Associates. Bosley was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 15, 2007, in St. Louis, Missouri. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_289
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Mayor and lawyer Hon. Freeman Robertson Bosley, Jr., the first African American mayor of St. Louis, Missouri, was born on July 20, 1954 in St. Louis to Marjorie Ellen and Freeman Bosley, Sr. Public service was instilled in Bosley by his father, a prominent citizen of “the Ville” in North St. Louis. Bosley, Sr. was elected city alderman in 1977 and unsuccessfully ran for mayor in 1985. Bosley attended Farragut Elementary School and was a student activist at the predominantly white Central High School, graduating in 1972. He enrolled at Saint Louis University, where he received B.A. degrees in urban affairs and in political science in 1976. During college, Bosley was mentored by Ernest Calloway, a civil rights activist and professor at Saint Louis University. Bosley went on to attend the Saint Louis University School of Law, earning his J.D. degree in 1979. While at Saint Louis University, Bosley was elected president of the Black Student Alliance and the Black-American Law Students Association.

After law school, Bosley worked as a staff attorney for the Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, specializing in consumer affairs and utility companies. He was later employed by the law offices of Bussey & Jordan. Inspired in law school by U.S. District Court Judge Clyde Cahill, Bosley helped in the political campaigns of Charles Quincy Troupe and Charles Bussey. In 1982, Bosley became the first African American Circuit Clerk of Courts for the 22nd Judicial Circuit, a position he held for ten years. During this time, he also served as the 3rd Ward Democratic Committeeman before being elected the St. Louis Democratic Party Chair in 1990. Bosley's political leadership set the stage for his successful mayoral run, winning the April 6, 1993 election with 66.5% of the vote.

Early in his term, Bosley oversaw the safe evacuation of 10,000 residents during the Great Flood of 1993. He later helped to orchestrate the \$70 million bailout of Trans World Airlines (TWA), resulting in the airline

relocating its world headquarters to the city. He facilitated the move of the Los Angeles Rams football team to St. Louis in 1995, leading to a 2000 Super Bowl win. Bosley's administration passed two property tax increases, successes that generated an additional \$40 million of revenue for the city. Bosley ran for re-election in 1997 but lost to the African American police chief, Clarence Harmon, in the Democratic Primary. Bosley also ran unsuccessfully for mayor in the Democratic Primary in 2001. After leaving office, Bosley practiced law with the law firm Caldwell & Singleton and joined two other former mayors, James Conway and Vincent Schoemehl, as leaders in the group Citizens for Home Rule. Bosley started his own law practice, Bosley & Associates, in 2004 and continues to serve as mentor to young legal and political hopefuls.

Bosley is divorced with a daughter, Sydney. He continues to live in the same North St. Louis neighborhood where he grew up.

Hon. Freeman Robertson Bosley, Jr. was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on October 15, 2007.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Freeman Bosley was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 15, 2007, in St. Louis, Missouri, and was recorded on 7 Betacam SP videocassettes. Mayor and lawyer Freeman Bosley (1954 - ) was the first African American mayor of the City of St. Louis. He was also the first African American Circuit Clerk of Courts for the 22nd Judicial Circuit of St. Louis. He currently heads his own law firm, Bosley & Associates.

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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:

Bosley, Freeman

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews.  
Bosley, Freeman--Interviews.

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African American mayors--Missouri--Saint Louis--Interviews.

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African American lawyers--Missouri--Saint Louis--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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Saint Louis (Mo.). Mayor

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Bosley & Associates

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### **HistoryMakers® Category:**

PoliticalMakers

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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 Freeman Bosley, October 15, 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 8/9/2011 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding

aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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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, October 15, 2007

Video Oral History Interview with Freeman Bosley, Section A2007\_289\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:10  
2007/10/15

Hon. Freeman Bosley, Jr. discusses his family history. Preston Bosley, his paternal grandfather, was originally from Little Rock, Arkansas, but fled to St. Louis, Missouri, following a dispute with a white man. Preston helped establish several community institutions, including the first black-owned grocery store. The Bosleys were members of the Samaritan United Methodist Church in St. Louis. His maternal grandmother, Minnie Harvey Robertson, was a member of a prominent African American family in the Elleardsville neighborhood of St. Louis. Bosley talks about his parents' youth. His mother, Marjorie Bosley, participated in the annual Annie Malone Parade, one of St. Louis' largest African American events. His father, Freeman Bosley, Sr., studied at the DeVry Institute of Technology in Chicago to become an electrician. He posed as a Puerto Rican since DeVry excluded African Americans. In the 1960s, Bosley, Sr. built a recording studio in the family's home and founded Teek Records.

African American families--Missouri--Saint Louis.

African Americans--Social life and customs--Missouri--Saint Louis.

Segregation in education--Illinois--Chicago.

Passing (Identity).

African Americans in sound recording industry.

DeVry Institute of Technology.

Video Oral History Interview with Freeman Bosley, Section A2007\_289\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:10  
2007/10/15

Hon. Freeman Bosley, Jr. recalls his father's political career. Freeman Bosley, Sr. was elected to the St. Louis Board of Aldermen for the 3rd Ward in 1977. His father ran unsuccessfully for St. Louis mayor in 1985. Bosley then discusses the color consciousness of his maternal grandmother, Minnie Robertson. As a result, his mother was initially reluctant to date his father because he was dark-skinned. Bosley reflects further on the influence of Minnie Robertson, who exposed him to African American history. Bosley's mother stressed the importance of education, helping him and his sister with their schoolwork. In high school, academics became less of a priority as Bosley's focus shifted to earning money by painting, repairing televisions, and organizing dice games. He describes his years at Central High School, whose student body was predominantly white when he entered but the majority was African American by the time that he graduated.

African American families--Missouri--Saint Louis.  
African American politicians--Missouri--Saint Louis.  
African American education, Secondary--Missouri--Saint Louis.  
Central High School (Saint Louis, Mo.).  
African Americans--Race identity.

Video Oral History Interview with Freeman Bosley, Section A2007\_289\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:30  
2007/10/15

Hon. Freeman Bosley, Jr. reflects on his political awakening. He participated in walkouts during high school but was not well informed about the issues involved. He became more politically engaged during his father's 1973 campaign for alderman. Bosley talks about his activism at Saint Louis University where he was involved in the Black Student Alliance and served as president during his senior year of college. Bosley helped found United Community Youth with James Robinette, a friend and political mentor. The organization's political study group read Marxist-Leninist and Black Nationalist literature, such as "Strategy for a Black Agenda" and Mao's "Little Red Book." Bosley's parents worried that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) would start monitoring his activities. He later learned that the FBI did conduct surveillance on the bookstore where the group met. Bosley discusses his transition into law school.

African American college students--Missouri--Saint Louis.  
African American student movements--Missouri--Saint Louis.  
Saint Louis (Mo.)--Politics and government.  
United States. Federal Bureau of Investigation.  
Black nationalism--Missouri--Saint Louis.

Video Oral History Interview with Freeman Bosley, Section A2007\_289\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:10  
2007/10/15

Hon. Freeman Bosley, Jr. talks about law school. He interned at Legal Services of Eastern Missouri during the summers because he wanted to help impoverished people. After graduation, he pursued employment there but was not hired until he challenged them about how their hiring practices violated the Legal Services Corporation Act. Bosley discusses his decision to run for clerk of the circuit court against Joe Rhode, the politically powerful incumbent. He enlisted support from his father, his childhood friends, and political activist associates from college. African American political officials, including Charles Quincy Troupe, Evelyn Walker, State Senator J.B. "Jet" Banks and Leroy Tyus, also supported his campaign. Bosley speaks at length about the challenges of his position as clerk. He fired unfit employees but allowed ward organizations to send better qualified replacements for patronage jobs. Bosley shares his disappointment with many of his appointees.

Political campaigns--Missouri--Saint Louis.  
African Americans--Education (Higher).  
Legal aid----Missouri.  
Legal Services of Eastern Missouri.  
African American clerks of court--Missouri--Saint Louis.  
African American law students.  
Saint Louis (Mo.)--Officials and employees--Selection and appointment.

Video Oral History Interview with Freeman Bosley, Section A2007\_289\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:10  
2007/10/15

Hon. Freeman Bosley, Jr. reflects on the disappointments and betrayals that he faced in professional politics. When he was mayor, close political associates stole money from the city's Midnight Basketball program. The event generated a media scandal that damaged his mayoralty and reelection campaign. Bosley discusses his other legal and political positions. He talks about his work as clerk of the circuit court from 1982 to 1993. During this time, he became the first African American chairman of the St. Louis Democratic Party, winning the post with the support of marginalized white committeewomen and younger African American elected officials. As chairman, Bosley built relationships with the corporate community and generated votes for the gubernatorial election of Governor Mel Carnahan and the presidential election of President Bill Clinton. With his father's encouragement, Bosley also began quietly preparing for a race for mayor of St. Louis, announcing his candidacy in November 1992.

Saint Louis (Mo.)--Politics and government.

African American politicians--Missouri--Saint Louis.

Presidents--United States--Election.

Democratic Party (Mo.).

Video Oral History Interview with Freeman Bosley, Section A2007\_289\_001\_006, TRT: 0:30:30  
2007/10/15

Hon. Freeman Bosley, Jr. talks at length about his mayoral campaign and term. His candidacy enjoyed a broad base of support. Celebrity supporters included rapper Nelly and Cedric the Entertainer. Bosley speaks openly about the hardships that his candidacy caused his family. He discusses many of his accomplishments as mayor. He appointed a record number of African Americans in his administration, passed a sales tax proposition to generate revenue, implemented a raise for city employees and restored public parks and bridges. His administration also built a major sports stadium and recruited the Rams, a National Football League franchise, to the city. Bosley attributes much of his success to the extensive political alliances he built prior to becoming mayor. He also acknowledges that his activism concerning meaningful minority participation in city contracts caused some tensions in the racially polarized city.

Saint Louis (Mo.)--Politics and government.

African American politicians--Missouri--Saint Louis.

African American mayors--Missouri--Saint Louis.

Political campaigns--Missouri--Saint Louis.

Saint Louis (Mo.)--Race relations--Political aspects.

Video Oral History Interview with Freeman Bosley, Section A2007\_289\_001\_007, TRT: 0:23:20  
2007/10/15

Hon. Freeman Bosley, Jr. gives details about his unsuccessful reelection campaign in 1997 against African American police chief Clarence Harmon. Bosley believes that whites supported Harmon because they feared that a white candidate could not oust Bosley. This is supported by the fact that Harmon received 90% of the white vote in 1997 but only 5% in his 2001 reelection bid against a white opponent. Bosley talks about his post-mayoral career as an attorney in private practice. Bosley shares advice to potential political candidates, urging African American leaders to act upon their words. Bosley reflects on different decisions he might have made as mayor. He notes that many of St. Louis' best and brightest African Americans leave the city. Bosley expresses the hope that his daughter will return to the city after receiving her education to continue the family's tradition of public service.

Saint Louis (Mo.)--Politics and government.

Political campaigns--Missouri--Saint Louis.

Elections--Missouri--Saint Louis.

African Americans--Politics and government--Missouri--Saint Louis.