

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Hugh Barrington Clarke, Jr.

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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>	Clarke, Hugh Barrington, 1954-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Hugh Barrington Clarke, Jr.,
<b>Dates:</b>	February 29, 2008
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2008
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:55:20).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Defense lawyer and judge The Honorable Hugh Barrington Clarke, Jr. (1954 - ) represented high profile clients like rapper Tupac Shakur and NFL football player Mushin Muhammad. Clarke was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 29, 2008, in Lansing, Michigan. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2008_040
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Judge Hugh Barrington Clarke, Jr. was born on July 14, 1954, in Detroit, Michigan, to Gwendolyn and Hugh Barrington Clarke, Sr. As a young boy, Clarke enjoyed playing baseball and was influenced by Detroit's "Motown Sound," often performing in his school's talent shows. He attended Pattengill Elementary School and Dixon Elementary School before attending Webber Junior High School as an adolescent. In 1967, during a time of great social and political upheaval, Clarke witnessed the Detroit Riots from his front porch. He went on to graduate at the age of sixteen from Cass Technical High School.

In 1971, Clarke enrolled at Oakland Community College. Afterwards, he pursued his B.S. degree in criminal justice at Wayne State University. Clarke followed his career path by attending the Detroit City Police Academy. However, in 1976, due to a lack of city funding, he accepted a managing position at a women's clothing store before enrolling at Thomas M. Cooley Law School. While in law school, Clarke worked on the drafting of the Revised Michigan Probate Code and various amendments to the Michigan Code of Criminal Procedure. He graduated in 1979 with his J.D. degree and went on to work for the Associate General Counsel for the State Senate. Then, in 1981, Clarke went to work at the law firm of Rosenbaum and Holland. The firm later added another attorney and changed its name to Rosenbaum, Holland, Clarke and Foster. In 1989, Clarke founded Hugh Clarke and Associates and began working on high profile criminal cases including providing legal services for rapper Tupac Shakur and NFL football player Muhsin Muhammad.

In 2000, Clarke married former Olympic track and field silver medalist, Judith Brown. The married couple went on to have a baby boy, Hugh Barrington Clarke, IV. Clarke became a member of the Lansing Board of Education in 2003 and served as its president in 2007. During that time, he served as chair of the superintendent search committee and chair of the personnel search. In 2010, Clarke was appointed as a judge on the 54-A District Court in Lansing, Michigan.

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Hugh Barrington Clarke, Jr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 29, 2008, in Lansing, Michigan, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Defense lawyer and judge The Honorable Hugh Barrington Clarke, Jr. (1954 - ) represented high profile clients like rapper Tupac Shakur and NFL football player Mushin Muhammad.

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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:

Clarke, Hugh Barrington, 1954-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Clarke, Hugh Barrington, 1954- --Interviews

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African American lawyers--Interviews

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African American executives--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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## Occupations:

Defense Lawyer

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Judge

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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 Hugh Barrington Clarke, Jr., February 29, 2008. 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 Hugh Barrington Clarke, Jr., Section  
A2008\_040\_001\_001, TRT: 0:27:40 ?

The Honorable Hugh Barrington Clarke, Jr. was born on July 14, 1954 in Detroit, Michigan to Gwendolyn Khouri Clarke and Hugh Barrington Clarke, Sr., both of whom were Jamaican immigrants. Clarke's maternal grandfather, Alfred Khouri, had Syrian heritage, and raised Clarke's mother in Kingston, Jamaica. There, she trained at a secretarial school before meeting and marrying Clarke's father, who was one of five children born to Luther Clarke. Around 1945, Clarke's father left his job as a postman, and moved to Detroit, Michigan, where he sought a position in the automobile industry. He initially found work as a janitor and bus driver for The Greyhound Corporation; and, one year later, was joined by Clarke's mother and older sister, Norma Clarke Mays. Clarke grew up in Detroit, where he lived with his family and paternal aunt, Idabelle Clarke Pickersgill. He remembers visiting Jamaica, and his aunt's stories about his father's childhood.

African American lawyers--Interviews.

African American executives--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Hugh Barrington Clarke, Jr., Section  
A2008\_040\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

The Honorable Hugh Barrington Clarke, Jr.'s father, Hugh Barrington Clarke, Sr., grew up in Jamaica, where he regularly attended Marcus Garvey's public speeches. After marrying Clarke's mother, Gwendolyn Khouri Clarke, the couple migrated from Jamaica to the east side of Detroit, Michigan. There, they joined a large West Indian immigrant community, and participated in Jamaican parades and picnics with Clarke and his sisters, Norma Clarke Mays and Karen Clarke. Clarke's father also encouraged his son's interest in sports, including the Detroit Tigers baseball team. At this point in the interview, Clarke describes the popular culture of Detroit, where he often saw black professional athletes and musicians like The Temptations. He also talks about the riots of 1967 and 1968, and the period of white flight that followed. Around this time, Clarke's family moved to Detroit's northwest side. In addition, Clarke remembers the clothing trends of his childhood, including gabardine shirts and Cancellation Shoes.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Hugh Barrington Clarke, Jr., Section  
A2008\_040\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

The Honorable Hugh Barrington Clarke, Jr. attended Pattengill Elementary School in Detroit, Michigan, where his mother, Gwendolyn Khouri Clarke, encouraged his teachers to physically discipline him. When the Detroit Public Schools implemented a busing initiative, Clarke was sent to integrate Dixon Elementary School, where he was harassed by his white peers. His parents refused to intervene; and, after some time, Clarke befriended two white students, who protected him from further abuse. Clarke went on to study at Webber Middle School. In 1968, his family moved to the northwest side of Detroit, where he enrolled at Cass Technical High School. There, Clarke mostly focused on his social life, and frequently skipped class. When he was caught, his mother and guidance counselor created a work study plan that allowed him to hold a part time position as an office clerk at the Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company, where he was the only black employee.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Hugh Barrington Clarke, Jr., Section  
A2008\_040\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

The Honorable Hugh Barrington Clarke, Jr. aspired to become a lawyer from an early age. At sixteen years old, he graduated from Cass Technical High School in Detroit, Michigan, and enrolled at the nearby Oakland Community College in

Farmington Hills, Michigan. After entering a scholarship competition with help from his counselor, Clarke was contacted by numerous universities, and decided to enroll at Detroit's Wayne State University. Around this time, he received a traffic ticket in Howell, Michigan, a small town known as a stronghold of the Ku Klux Klan. He did not go to court; and, while applying for a job, discovered that there was a warrant for his arrest. He was briefly jailed, and released on a \$100 bond. After completing his degree, Clarke managed a Winkelman's clothing store for one year, and then matriculated at the Thomas M. Cooley Law School in Lansing, Michigan, where he organized a chapter of the Black Law Students Association.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Hugh Barrington Clarke, Jr., Section A2008\_040\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

The Honorable Hugh Barrington Clarke, Jr. graduated from the Thomas M. Cooley Law School in Lansing, Michigan, and obtained a position as associate general counsel to the Michigan Legislature. There, he worked closely with Michigan State Senator Basil W. Brown; and met Paul A. Rosenbaum, a former chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, who gave Clarke an office to start his own private law practice. Clarke focused on criminal defense law, and helped found the Lansing Black Lawyers Association, which offered mentorship programs and networking opportunities for the city's African American attorneys and law students. He talks about three of his most notable clients, including rapper Tupac Shakur, whom Clarke defended against felony assault charges; football player Muhsin Muhammad, whom Clarke represented in a paternity suit; and Claude McCollum, an African American man with a learning disability who was convicted of rape and murder after the police extracted a false confession.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Hugh Barrington Clarke, Jr., Section A2008\_040\_001\_006, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

The Honorable Hugh Barrington Clarke, Jr. was appointed to the Lansing Board of Education in 2003, and was subsequently elected to a full six year term. At the time of the interview in 2008, the board was in the process of negotiating a solution for the three high schools in Lansing, Michigan that failed to meet the standards of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Also in 2008, Clarke represented the civil suit of Claude McCollum, an African American man who was falsely convicted and imprisoned for rape and murder in 2006. Clarke describes his plans for the future, and shares his concerns for the African American community. He also reflects upon his life, legacy and how he would like to be remembered. Clarke concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.