

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Royce West

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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>	West, Royce, 1952-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Royce West,
<b>Dates:</b>	May 11, 2010
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2010
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:18:18).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Lawyer and state senator The Honorable Royce West (1952 - ) was Texas' first African American chief felony prosecutor, and served as State Senator of the Texas twenty-third district. West was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 11, 2010, in Austin, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2010_020
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Royce West has received numerous accolades as a politician in addition to his responsibilities as managing partner of a law firm. He was born on September 26, 1952 in Annapolis, Maryland. West attended the University of Texas at Arlington where he received his B.A. and his M.A. degrees in Sociology. While an undergraduate, West became the first African American to serve as president of the Student Congress, foreshadowing later events. He went on to receive his J.D. degree from the University of Houston in 1979 and worked in the Harris County District Attorney's Office before joining the Dallas County District Attorney's office where he became Texas' first African American chief felony prosecutor.

Following his time there, in 1994, West became a senior partner at the Dallas law firm Robinson, West, and Gooden.

Since 1993, West has represented Dallas County (District 23) in the Texas Senate. He won the Democratic primary the previous year against Jerald Larry and Jesse Oliver with over 57 percent of the votes. He has served on Senate committees including Education, Finance, Health and Human Services, and Criminal Justice; has served as chair of committees on Jurisprudence and Higher Education, and is the current Chair of Intergovernmental Relations. He has also been appointed to the Education Commission of the States in 2005, the Intergovernmental Affairs Committee of the Council of State Governments in 2009, and the Southern Regional Education Board Legislative Advisory Council also in 2009. In 1994, West created the “One Community-One Child Program” to increase parental involvement in students’ academic careers. West furthered his law career by becoming managing partner of West & Associates, now a law firm of 11 attorneys in 1994. He was sworn in as President Pro Tempore of the Texas Senate in 2006 and during that period, served as Governor for a Day.

West has received Honorary Doctor of Law degrees from Paul Quinn College and Huston-Tillotson College in 1997 and 2000, respectively. In 2001, his alma mater, the University of Texas, recognized him with a Distinguished Alumni Service Award. Texas Monthly Magazine named him one of the “Ten Best Legislators in Texas” in 1999 and one of the “25 Most Powerful People in Texas Politics” in 2005. That same year, the Associated Press called him one of the “key players of the 2005 Legislature” in their “Movers and Shakers” list.

Royce West was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 12, 2010.

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## **Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Royce West was conducted by Denise Gines on May 11, 2010, in Austin, Texas, and was recorded on 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Lawyer and state senator The Honorable Royce West (1952 - ) was Texas’ first African American chief felony prosecutor, and served as State Senator of the Texas twenty-third district.

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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:**

West, Royce, 1952-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews

West, Royce, 1952---Interviews

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African American politicians--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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Texas Senate

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## **Occupations:**

Lawyer

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State Senator

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

LawMakers|PoliticalMakers

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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 Royce West, May 11, 2010. 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 Royce West, Section A2010\_020\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:39 ?

The Honorable Royce West was born on September 26, 1952 in Annapolis, Maryland to Gloria Morris Ashford and Willis West, Jr. His maternal grandfather, Samuel Morris, was the chief machinist at the Naval Station Pearl Harbor. With West's maternal grandmother, Evelyn Morris, he adopted West's mother, and settled in Parole, Maryland. West's paternal grandparents, Maude West and Willis West, Sr., lived in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where they owned a restaurant in Greenwood, the black business district. West's father served in the U.S. military, and his mother attended Virginia Union University. They met and married in Baltimore, Maryland, and then raised West in a middle class area of Annapolis, where his father worked as a carpenter. West attended Parole Elementary School; and, from an early age, aspired to become a lawyer like television character Perry Mason. After his mother married his stepfather, Benjamin Ashford, West's family relocated to Augsburg, Germany, where he attended Augsburg American Elementary School.

Family--History.

African Americans--Social conditions.

African American families--Oklahoma.

African American families--Texas.

African American families--Maryland.

Military bases, American--Germany.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Royce West, Section A2010\_020\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:52 ?

The Honorable Royce West moved with his family in 1964 from Germany to Dallas, Texas. He attended Dallas' Phyllis Wheatley Elementary School, where Principal Mitchell encouraged West and his peers to succeed. Later, West's family moved to Dallas' Frazier Courts housing projects, and he enrolled at Pearl C. Johnson Junior High School, where he was placed in advanced classes. He also played on the football team, and was influenced by government teacher Gloria White and Latin teacher Joseph L. Honore. In addition, West's early interest in law was nurtured by his shop teacher, Tommy Edwards, who hosted a mock trial to resolve an accusation of theft between two students, and enlisted West as the defense attorney. Then, West's family purchased a home in Dallas' middle class Highland Hills neighborhood, where West attended the majority white Wilmer-Hutchins High School. There, he was accosted with racial slurs, and faced discrimination in the athletics program.

Family--History.

African Americans--Social conditions.

African Americans--Religion.

African Americans--Education.

Dallas (Tex.)--Race relations.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Royce West, Section A2010\_020\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:18 ?

The Honorable Royce West attended the majority white Wilmer-Hutchins High School in Dallas, Texas. There, he faced discrimination, but received support from librarian Doris Price and football coach Walter Houston. Teacher Shirley Fisher helped West apply for college, and co-signed his school loan. Although West received several basketball scholarships offers, his racist coach did not inform him of them. Instead, West enrolled at Paris Junior

College, where he became president of the black student union. In 1971, he accepted a football scholarship to the mostly white University of Texas at Arlington, where he studied sociology, and worked for Professor B.T. Williams, Sr. He became the school's first black student body president during his senior year. After earning his degree, West enrolled in the school's graduate program in sociology. He was later accepted to the University of Houston Law Center, and interned at the Harris County District Attorney's Office. West earned his master's and J.D. degrees in 1979.

African Americans--Social conditions.

African Americans--Religion.

African Americans--Education.

Dallas (Tex.)--Race relations.

Segregation in education--United States.

University of Texas at Arlington--Alumni and alumnae.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Royce West, Section A2010\_020\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:51 ?

The Honorable Royce West passed the bar examination in 1979, and joined the Dallas County District Attorney's Office. Although he was a prosecutor, he once joined a black defendant's attorney in a motion for a new trial, after learning of the jury's racial bias. West eventually became Dallas County's first black chief felony prosecutor. In 1984, he left the district attorney's office to establish a criminal law practice, Royce West and Associates. He later joined Robinson, West and Gooden, PC, and then formed West and Associates LLP, where he represented football player Michael Irvin. In 1986, West became the first African American to run for district attorney of Dallas County; and, in 1993, he was elected to the Texas Senate. In this role, he established the historically black Prairie View A&M University's Texas Juvenile Crime Prevention Center, and secured funding for a Ph.D. degree program. He also implemented a stipend for elderly guardians of minor children.

Diversity in the workplace--United States.

African Americans--Texas.

Minorities--Employment--United States.

Juvenile delinquency.

Public welfare.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Royce West, Section A2010\_020\_001\_005, TRT: 0:18:38 ?

The Honorable Royce West was elected to the Texas Senate in 1993. That year, he established the Dr. Emmett J. Conrad Leadership Program, which funded internships for over two thousand college sophomores annually. He also founded the One Community-One Child program at Julia C. Frazier Elementary School in Dallas, Texas, and sponsored paid time off so that students' parents could participate in school functions. West went on to be appointed as the chairman of the Senate Interim Committee on Gangs and Juvenile Justice, which implemented programs to prevent gang activity. In 1997, he advocated for the creation of Dallas' first public university, leading to the establishment of the University of North Texas at Dallas in 2000. The university later hosted the state's first public law school. He also remembers Texas Lieutenant Governor Bob Bullock. West reflects upon his life and how he would like to be remembered, and shares a message to future generations.

Juvenile delinquency.

Bullock, Bob.

Minorities--Education (Higher)--United States.

Education--Parent participation.

Representative government and representation--

Demographic aspects--United States.