

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Dr. Marvin Griffin

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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>	Griffin, Marvin C., 1923-2013
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Marvin Griffin,
<b>Dates:</b>	May 14, 2010
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2010
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:30:34).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Pastor Reverend Dr. Marvin Griffin (1923 - 2013 ) served as religious leader for the New Hope Baptist Church and the Ebenezer Baptist Church. In honor of his accomplishments, a building associated with Ebenezer was named after him in 2002. Griffin was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 14, 2010, in Austin, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2010_021
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Religious and community leader, Marvin Collins Griffin was born on February 20, 1923 in Wichita, Kansas to Beatrice Howell and William Marvin Collins. He was raised by his aunt and uncle and was educated at public schools in Dallas, Texas before graduating from Bishop College with his B.A. degree. Griffin went on to receive four other degrees including his M.Div degree from the Oberlin Graduate School of Theology, his M.R.E. degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and his D.Min degree from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

Between 1951 and 1969, Griffin served as pastor of the New Hope Baptist Church in Waco, Texas. In 1969, he became a pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church and served on its Board of Directors. While at Ebenezer, he also served as the first black president of the Austin Independent School District board in 1978 for a two-year term. Griffin founded the East Austin Economic Development Corporation and in 1990, along with other Board and church members, he helped earn a grant for the Ebenezer Child Development Center to construct a new facility. In 2002, on his thirty-third anniversary as pastor of Ebenezer, the building that housed the Development Center was named the Marvin C. Griffin Building.

In addition to being a pastor, Griffin served as the corresponding secretary of the Missionary Baptist General Convention of Texas and the Director of Christian Education Enrichment Program at the National Baptist Fellowship of Churches. Griffin also spent time teaching as a Director and Lecturer for the Teacher Training Department of the National Baptist Sunday School. He also acted as an instructor at Ridgecrest, North Carolina, teaching “Pastoral Ministry in the Black Church.” He has served in many other capacities at state and national religious gatherings.

Griffin and his late wife Mrs. Lois King Griffin, had three daughters - Marva Lois Carter, Gaynelle Jones, and Ria Griffin. Rev. Griffin passed away on December 25, 2013.

Marvin Griffin was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 14, 2010.

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## **Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Reverend Dr. Marvin Griffin was conducted by Denise Gines on May 14, 2010, in Austin, Texas, and was recorded on 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Pastor Reverend Dr. Marvin Griffin (1923 - 2013 ) served as religious leader for the New Hope Baptist Church and the Ebenezer Baptist Church. In honor of his accomplishments, a building associated with Ebenezer was named after him in 2002.

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## **Restrictions**

### **Restrictions on Access**

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The

## 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:

Griffin, Marvin C., 1923-2013

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Griffin, Marvin C., 1923-2013--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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Ebenezer Baptist Church

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## **Occupations:**

Pastor

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

ReligionMakers

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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 Reverend Dr. Marvin Griffin, May 14, 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 Reverend Dr. Marvin Griffin, Section A2010\_021\_001\_001, TRT: 0:31:30 ?

Reverend Dr. Marvin Griffin was born on February 20, 1923 in Wichita, Kansas to Beatrice Howell and William Collins. His maternal family descended from a Cherokee tribe. Griffin's mother was born in Gans, Oklahoma to Mariah Howell and George Howell. Even though Griffin did not have a close relationship with his father, he spent time with his paternal uncles in Fort Gibson, Oklahoma. At four years old, Griffin was adopted by his maternal aunt, Beulah Howell Griffin, and her husband, Jesse Griffin, and moved with them to Dallas, Texas when he was seven years old. There, he attended Julia C. Frazier Elementary School, where he excelled academically, and participated in the drama club. He was an active member of Bethlehem Baptist Church, and aspired to be a preacher at an early age. Griffin grew up in the poor neighborhood of East Dallas, where he delivered sermons beneath a streetlight. Griffin went on to attend Lincoln High School, which functioned on a split schedule due to a surplus of students.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Marvin Griffin, Section A2010\_021\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:27 ?

Reverend Dr. Marvin Griffin helped print The Dallas Gazette, and delivered The Dallas Morning News while in attendance at Lincoln High School in Dallas, Texas. Griffin graduated in 1940, and was encouraged by his maternal aunt, Beulah Howell Griffin, to attend Bishop College in Marshall, Texas, even though he could not afford the tuition. To fund his education at the private

Baptist school, he waited tables in the college's dining hall. At Bishop College, he met Lois King Griffin, whom he secretly married in 1943, as married students could not live on campus. Griffin also headed the college's debate team and local YMCA. After obtaining a bachelor's degree in sociology, Griffin enrolled at the Oberlin Graduate School of Theology in Oberlin, Ohio. Following his graduation in 1947, Griffin struggled to find employment in the nearby Cleveland, Ohio, and returned to Dallas, where he worked as a coordinator for mission work at the Southern Baptist Convention.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Marvin Griffin, Section A2010\_021\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:39 ?

Reverend Dr. Marvin Griffin was ordained at Greater Bethlehem Baptist Church in 1942 while a student at Bishop College in Marshall, Texas. In 1951, he became the youngest person to serve as pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in Waco, Texas, one of the oldest African American churches in Texas. As leader of the church, Griffin organized a children's choir, changed funeral procedures, formed a relationship with Waco's Jewish community and raised the money to build the church's first parsonage. In Waco, Griffin also participated in a protest against a local milk company that refused to hire African American salespersons. After eighteen years at New Hope Baptist Church, Griffin became the pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Austin, Texas. He reflects upon the theologians that inspired his religious philosophy, including Harry Emerson Fosdick and Walter Marshall Horton, who was a professor at Griffin's alma mater, Graduate School of Theology in Oberlin, Ohio.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Marvin Griffin, Section A2010\_021\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:27 ?

Reverend Dr. Marvin Griffin became a civil rights leader in Waco, Texas, and was instrumental in the integration of Waco's Baylor University. In 1958, Griffin met Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at a convention in Chicago, Illinois, and saw him speak in Evanston, Illinois in 1963. In 1969, Griffin became the pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Austin, Texas. He was also the head of the Democratic Progressive Voters League, which encouraged

African American participation in the electoral process. During this time, Baylor University expanded its campus, and displaced a nearby black church. Griffin studied at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, becoming its first African American graduate; and went on to attend Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Austin, Texas. He recalls the history of Toliver Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Waco, and a lynching incident that caused the African American residents to flee Waco during the 19th century.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Marvin Griffin, Section A2010\_021\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:31 ?

Reverend Dr. Marvin Griffin published 'Texas African American Baptists' in 1994, a book about African American members of Baptist conventions. At this point in the interview, he describes the history of the Northern Baptist Convention, Southern Baptist Convention and Progressive National Baptist Convention, and the benefits of Ebenezer Baptist Church's affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention. As pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Austin, Texas, Griffin founded the East Austin Economic Development Corporation, through which he developed affordable apartment complexes for the elderly members of his church. He also created the Ebenezer Child Development Center, and served as the first African American president of the Austin Independent School District Board. Griffin reflects upon his legacy and his concerns for the African American community, and concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.