

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with William Akins

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Akins, William Charles, 1932-2017
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with William Akins,
Dates:	May 13, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:29:12).
Abstract:	Academic administrator William Akins (1932 - 2017) was the founding principal of the integrated L.C. Anderson High School, and an administrator in the Austin Independent School District. In 2000, Akins High School was named in his honor. Akins was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 13, 2010, in Austin, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_025
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Academic administrator and educator during integration, William Charles Akins was born in 1932 in Austin, Texas. He attended segregated Blackshear Elementary School. He next went to Kealing Junior High School and then Anderson High School where he met W.B. Campbell who inspired him to become a principal. He graduated from Huston-Tillotson University with his B.A. degree in history in 1954 and received his M.A. degree from Prairie View A&M University in 1956. Akins also received his administrative certification from Southwest Texas State University.

In 1959, Akins began teaching at Anderson High School, his alma mater, also known as Old Anderson. Three years after beginning, he was recognized as Anderson's Teacher of the Year. In 1964, Akins was selected to be the first African American teacher at Johnson High School, a recently desegregated school. In 1971, he returned to Anderson High School to serve as Assistant Principal where he served until it was closed due to busing desegregation laws. He was then transferred to Lanier High School before becoming the first principal of the new L.C. Anderson High School in 1973. Akins worked through conflicts to set the school on its feet. After leaving L.C. Anderson High School he assumed several central administration roles for the Austin Independent School District including Assistant Superintendent for Business Affairs and Associate Superintendent for Development and Community Partnerships.

Akins received an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Huston-Tillotson University in 1982. For his commitment to the Austin school district, in 1998, the district Board of Trustees voted to name Austin's newest high school after Akins. The following year the groundbreaking ceremony for the W. Charles Akins High School was held and the school opened to more than 2,700 students.

Akins passed away on March 29, 2017 at age 84.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with William Akins was conducted by Denise Gines on May 13, 2010, in Austin, Texas, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Academic administrator William Akins (1932 - 2017) was the founding principal of the integrated L.C. Anderson High School, and an administrator in the Austin Independent School District. In 2000, Akins High School was named in his honor.

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:

Akins, William Charles, 1932-2017

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Akins, William Charles, 1932-2017 --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Austin Independent School District L.C. Anderson High School (Austin, Tex.)

Occupations:

Academic Administrator

HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

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 William Akins, May 13, 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 6/7/2022 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 William Akins, Section A2010_025_001_001, TRT: 0:29:17
2010/05/13

William Akins was born on November 9, 1932 in Austin, Texas to Mattie Lee Watson Akins and Elmer Akins. His maternal grandmother, Beatrice Gordon Watson, moved from Ohio to Texas, where she married Robert Watson. Akins' mother worked in domestic service in Austin; and later became a custodian at the Brackenridge Hospital in Dallas, Texas. Akins' father was employed at a

barbershop in Austin; and, when the shop closed, became a custodian at the Texas State Capitol, where he developed a strong reputation and was eventually promoted to an administrative clerk position at the State Supreme Court. Due to his parents' careers, Akins was often left in the care of his paternal grandmother, Hattie Franklin Smith. On Sundays, he attended a Methodist church with his mother, and sometimes accompanied his father to Baptist services in the afternoon. Akins began his education at Austin's Blackshear Elementary School, where Principal Friendly R. Rice instituted the district's first hot lunch program in the late 1930s.

Video Oral History Interview with William Akins, Section A2010_025_001_002, TRT: 0:29:49
2010/05/13

William Akins grew up in the segregated community of East Austin, Texas during the Great Depression. Many of his black neighbors worked at the post office, and most of the women were employed as domestics, including Akins' mother, Mattie Lee Watson Akins. Due to her work schedule, Akins was often left in the care of his paternal grandmother, Hattie Franklin Smith. On Christmas Eve, he accompanied his mother to her white employers' home, where he was exposed to an all-white situation for the first time. Akins began his education at Austin's Blackshear Elementary School, and then attended Theodore Kealing Junior High School and L.C. Anderson High School, where he developed his aspiration to become a high school principal. With the encouragement of his mother and teachers, Akins was admitted to the historically black Tillotson College in Austin. There, he studied English and social studies, and was influenced by Professor Marion Milroy Curry to join the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity.

Video Oral History Interview with William Akins, Section A2010_025_001_003, TRT: 0:27:45
2010/05/13

William Akins graduated in 1954 with a bachelor's degree in history from Tillotson College in Austin, Texas. There, he joined the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity; and, at one of the organization's social events, met Estella Wilson Akins, whom he married in 1956. After graduation, Akins struggled to find a job; but, with help from a fraternity brother, obtained a teaching position at Booker T. Washington High School in Marlin, Texas. He went on to join the faculty of Austin's L.C. Anderson High School. During this time, Akins completed a master's degree in history at Prairie View A&M University in Prairie View, Texas. With the encouragement of his mentor, Vice Principal H.L. Gaines, he also obtained a certification from Southwest Texas State College in San Marcos, Texas. When the Austin Independent School District implemented a busing program in the 1960s, Akins was asked to integrate the faculty of Albert Sidney Johnston High School, where he was named the dean of boys in 1968.

Video Oral History Interview with William Akins, Section A2010_025_001_004, TRT: 0:30:21
2010/05/13

William Akins served as the dean of boys and vice principal of the previously all-white Albert Sidney Johnston High School in Austin, Texas. When the all-black L.C. Anderson High School was shut down in 1971, many of Akins' former colleagues were sent to integrate other schools. That year, Akins became the assistant principal of Austin's Lanier High School; and, when a new, integrated L.C. Anderson High School opened in Austin, Akins was appointed as its principal. After violence broke out among the students, some parents asked for his removal; but Akins was permitted to stay, and succeeded in unifying the student body. In the mid-1980s, he transferred to the central office of the Austin

Integrated School District, where he worked with the NAACP to ensure that the district remained integrated. During this time, Akins served as the head of the local chapter of Huston Tillotson University's alumni association, and was granted an honorary doctorate from the university for his service as an educator.

Video Oral History Interview with William Akins, Section A2010_025_001_005, TRT: 0:28:11
2010/05/13

William Akins served a football game official for the Austin Independent School District (AISD), in addition to his role as an educator. He was also a sportscaster and newscaster on KLRN-TV, which was broadcast from the University of Texas in Austin, Texas. During his career with the AISD, Akins aided in the implementation of the Austin Partners in Education's adopt-a-school program, and established a chapter of Junior Achievement USA at L.C. Anderson High School. He served on the boards of the Boys and Girls Club and the National Urban League, and was a founding member of Austin Capital City Lions Club, which was one of the organization's first African American chapters. Akins was a lifelong member of Austin's Wesley United Methodist Church and a frequent attendee at Methodist conventions, including the General Conference and jurisdictional conferences, where he served as a delegate. In 2000, Akins High School was named in honor of his achievements.

Video Oral History Interview with William Akins, Section A2010_025_001_006, TRT: 0:03:49
2010/05/13

William Akins narrates his photographs.