Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com

Creator: Rocker, Arthur, 1955-

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Arthur Rocker, Sr.,

Dates: October 26, 2012

Bulk Dates: 2012

Physical Description: 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:31:18).

Abstract: Civil rights activist Reverend Dr. Arthur Rocker, Sr. (1955 - ) was the founder and chairman of Operation People for Peace, Inc. Rocker was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 26, 2012, in Detroit, Michigan. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

Identification: A2012_201

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civil rights activist Reverend Dr. Arthur "Art" Rocker, Sr. was born on June 22, 1955 in Atlanta, Georgia to Samuel William Rocker, Sr. and Reba Craft-Rocker. From the age of seven until eighteen years of age, Rocker was raised and mentored by Reverend Dr. William Holmes Borders, pastor of Wheat Street Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. At the age of sixteen, Rocker became the president of the youth chapter of the Democratic Party Club. After graduating from L.J. Price High School in 1963, Rocker enlisted in the U.S. Army and served for three years. Rocker then attended the Massey Business College earning his Associate’s degree. He then went on to attend Carver Bible Institute in 1969 and was ordained as a minister and evangelized by Reverend Dr. William Holmes
Arthur M. Rocker, Sr. was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on October 26, 2018.
Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reverend Dr. Arthur Rocker, Sr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 26, 2012, in Detroit, Michigan, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Civil rights activist Reverend Dr. Arthur Rocker, Sr. (1955 - ) was the founder and chairman of Operation People for Peace, Inc.

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:

Rocker, Arthur, 1955-
Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)
Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Rocker, Arthur, 1955---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)
The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection
Southern Christian Leadership Conference

Occupations:

Civil Rights Activist

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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
Preferred Citation


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).

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 Reverend Dr. Arthur Rocker, Sr., Section A2012_201_001_001, TRT: 1:28:47 2012/10/26

Reverend Dr. Arthur Rocker, Sr. was born on June 22, 1945 in Atlanta, Georgia to Reba Craft Rocker and Samuel Rocker, Sr. His maternal grandmother, Lula Austin Craft, moved with her family from Virginia to Statham, Georgia, where she met and married Reverend Reuben Craft. They raised twelve children, including Rocker’s mother; and owned property in Statham. Rocker’s mother’s family later moved to the Fourth Ward of Atlanta, where Rocker’s mother and maternal aunt started a quilting business. Rocker’s paternal family changed their
surname from Johnson to Rocker because of their residence on the Rocker plantation. His paternal grandfather was also a preacher, and Rocker’s father was taught to read by white Christians. Rocker’s parents met in Atlanta, and raised Rocker and his siblings in the Fourth Ward, where they belonged to the congregation of the Wheat Street Baptist Church. Their home was located less than a mile from the residence of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Alfred Daniel Williams King.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Arthur Rocker, Sr., Section A2012_201_001_002, TRT: 2:30:17 2012/10/26

Reverend Dr. Arthur Rocker, Sr.’s father, Samuel Rocker, Sr., moved to Atlanta, Georgia as a young man. He worked at the Coca-Cola Bottling Company, and secured a position as a chauffeur for the Montgomery family, who owned The Coca-Cola Company. Rocker’s father aspired to move his family out of the Grady Homes housing projects, where Rocker was raised alongside his twelve siblings. Rocker attended Yonge Street Elementary School, where he was frightened of his teacher and spoke very little in class. Later, his family moved to Georgia Avenue, and Rocker transferred to Croman Elementary School. He crossed a large train yard on his route to school, and spent his free time watching for the Tennessee Egg Company truck in order to take home any chickens that fell out. When Rocker was nine years old, his parents purchased their first home in an Atlanta subdivision called Thomasville Heights. The house had three bedrooms, and Rocker often slept on a pallet in the closet or at the foot of his brothers’ beds.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Arthur Rocker, Sr., Section A2012_201_001_003, TRT: 3:31:08 2012/10/26

Reverend Dr. Arthur Rocker, Sr. attended Yonge Street Elementary School in Atlanta, Georgia, where a kind teacher occasionally gave him money for lunch. He also cleaned the bathrooms at the Zion Hill Baptist Church, where his father was the assistant pastor. The church was located several miles away in the all-black Johnsontown neighborhood, and Rocker’s family returned home before sundown to avoid traveling through white neighborhoods after dark. When Rocker was eleven years old, he was sent
to work for Reverend William Holmes Borders at the Wheat Street Baptist Church, where Rocker’s family had previously belonged to the congregation. Reverend Borders was active in Atlanta’s Civil Rights Movement, and led a bus boycott against the advice of Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr. While living with Reverend Borders and his wife, Rocker cleaned the church and met influential figures like Joseph H. Jackson, George Romney, Adam Clayton Powell and James Baldwin.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Arthur Rocker, Sr., Section A2012_201_001_004, TRT: 4:30:17 2012/10/26

Reverend Dr. Arthur Rocker, Sr. began working for Reverend William Holmes Borders in 1956, when he was eleven years old. He cleaned the Wheat Street Baptist Church, and often slept at the home of Reverend Borders and his wife, Julia Pate Borders. Borders and several other middle class African Americans lived on the previously all-white Hunter Street, for which they often received threatening phone calls. At this point in the interview, Rocker describes Borders’ rivalries with black leaders like Morehouse College President Benjamin Mays, who ousted Borders from the School of Religion; and Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr. of the nearby Ebenezer Baptist Church. He also talks about Reverend Borders’ wife, who was a friend of Alberta Williams King and hid their conversations from her husband. Rocker met numerous civil rights leaders at the Wheat Street Baptist Church, including Joseph H. Jackson and Julian Bond. He continued working for Borders after entering Luther Judson Price High School.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Arthur Rocker, Sr., Section A2012_201_001_005, TRT: 5:30:32 2012/10/26

Reverend Dr. Arthur Rocker, Sr. lived with Reverend William Holmes Borders and Julia Pate Borders while attending at Luther Judson Price High School in Atlanta, Georgia. During his senior year, Rocker raised an unprecedented amount of funding for the school. He was honored at his graduation in 1963. Afterwards, Rocker enlisted in the U.S. military, and was stationed in Germany as a clerk typist. He also earned extra money by making small loans to his peers. In 1966, Rocker received
making small loans to his peers. In 1966, Rocker received deployment orders to Vietnam. Guided by Reverend Borders, he refused to deploy, even as his superior officers attempted to coerce him. Rocker was influenced by the experiences of his older brothers and friends, many of whom either died in combat or suffered severe handicaps while serving in Vietnam. He was discharged with Reverend Borders’ help, and returned to Atlanta in 1966, in time to visit Julia Pate Borders before her death. Rocker then enrolled at Morehouse College, and went on to attend Massey Business College.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Arthur Rocker, Sr., Section A2012_201_001_006, TRT: 6:29:51 2012/10/26

Reverend Dr. Arthur Rocker lived with Reverend William Holmes Borders, and witnessed Borders’ support for both the National Baptist Convention USA, Inc. and the Progressive United Baptist Convention when the groups split in 1961. After serving in the U.S. Army from 1963 to 1966, Rocker returned to Atlanta, Georgia to speak to Julia Pate Borders on her deathbed, where she confessed her bitterness about her husband’s infidelity. Rocker was also in Atlanta at the time of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination in 1968. He met many of the civil rights leaders who attended Dr. King’s funeral, including Vernon E. Jordan, Jr., Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Samuel Dewitt Proctor and Reverend Dr. Gardner Taylor. Rocker also met Hosea Williams, who became a close friend of Reverend Borders’ after moving to Atlanta. With Borders’ encouragement, Rocker enrolled at Morehouse College. He was expelled for selling alcohol on campus and transferred to Massey Business College, where he studied accounting.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Arthur Rocker, Sr., Section A2012_201_001_007, TRT: 7:30:26 2012/10/26

Reverend Dr. Arthur Rocker, Sr. met his wife at Luther Judson Price High School in Atlanta, Georgia, where he helped her win a campaign for the student government. They married in 1968, following his graduation from Atlanta’s Massey Business College. Rocker worked as Benjamin Mays’ chauffeur, and was hired by Warren Cochrane to distribute $5 million to black homeowners through the Butler Street YMCA. After three years,
Rocker enrolled at Albany State College in Albany, Georgia. In 1972, he was recruited by NAACP activist Lonnie C. King, Jr. to organize black voters on behalf of Shirley Chisholm’s presidential campaign, which received strong support in the Georgia primary election despite the candidacy of Georgia’s governor, James Earl “Jimmy” Carter, Jr. Rocker also started a cab company while attending Albany State College. During his fourth year, he was accused of operating a prostitution ring and forced to leave the school. He and his wife returned to Atlanta, where he entered the real estate business.