

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Charles N. Atkins

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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>	Atkins, Charles N., 1952-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Charles N. Atkins,
<b>Dates:</b>	December 16, 2016
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2016
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:23:04).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Investment banker Charles N. Atkins (1953 - ) served as the executive director of Morgan Stanley from 1990 to 2013, the founder of Atkins Capital Strategies LLC, and a senior advisor at Guggenheim Securities, LLC. Atkins was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 16, 2016, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2016_040
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Investment banker Charles N. Atkins was born on December 12, 1952 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma to Dr. Charles Atkins, Sr. and Hannah Diggs Atkins. Atkins' mother was the first African American woman to be elected to the Oklahoma House of Representatives in 1958, serving until 1980. Atkins graduated from Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School in Oklahoma City in 1971, and went on to receive his B.A. degree in political science, magna cum laude, from Howard University in Washington, D.C. in 1975. Atkins then earned his J.D. degree from Harvard Law School in 1978.

Following his graduation from Harvard Law School, Atkins served as an associate assistant to President Jimmy Carter, and as the second legislative counsel to U.S. Senator David L. Boren of Oklahoma. In 1984, he was named deputy director of the Democratic National Convention platform committee, as well as deputy campaign manager for Walter Mondale's vice-presidential candidate, Geraldine Ferarro. Atkins worked as a senior vice president at Lehman Brothers from 1988 to 1990 before leaving to join Morgan Stanley. As executive director, Atkins focused on corporate structured finance and utility sector recapitalization, and headed the corporate reorganization of Constellation Energy. He also served on President Bill Clinton's presidential transition team in 1993, and was appointed by President Clinton to serve on the Advisory Committee of the U.S. Export-Import Bank. Atkins left Morgan Stanley in 2013 to found Atkins Capital Strategies LLC. In 2015, he became the executive chairman of Premier League Basketball in the United Kingdom, and a partner at Maroon Capital Group LLC. In 2017, Atkins became a senior advisor at Guggenheim Securities, LLC in New York City, focusing on corporate structured finance for corporate and financial sponsor clients.

Atkins was a trustee of The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the American Folk Art Museum, in addition to serving on the board of advisors for his elementary school, Casady School in Oklahoma City. Atkins also worked with McKinsey & Company, publishing multiple financial reports such as *Global Capital Markets: Entering a New Era*, in collaboration with a team of economists. Atkins has been awarded two U.S. patents for innovative

financing structures.

Charles N. Atkins was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on December 16, 2016.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Charles N. Atkins was conducted by Harriette Cole on December 16, 2016, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Investment banker Charles N. Atkins (1953 - ) served as the executive director of Morgan Stanley from 1990 to 2013, the founder of Atkins Capital Strategies LLC, and a senior advisor at Guggenheim Securities, LLC.

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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:

Atkins, Charles N., 1952-

Cole, Harriette (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Atkins, Charles N., 1952- --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:

Investment Banker

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Lawyer

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers|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 Charles N. Atkins, December 16, 2016. 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 Charles N. Atkins, Section A2016\_040\_001\_001, TRT: 1:29:01  
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Charles N. Atkins was born on December 25, 1952 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma to Hannah Diggs Atkins and Charles N. Atkins, Sr. His maternal grandmother, Mabel Kennedy Diggs, came from a prominent African American family in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where his great uncle, Francis Marion Kennedy, Sr., was president of the Winston-Salem Teachers College. Atkins' father was born in Trinidad, and immigrated to the United States at eighteen years old. At that time, he joined his mother, Gertrude Atkins, who was a seamstress in New York City's Harlem neighborhood. There, Atkins' father found work as a camp counselor through the National Urban League. He graduated from DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx, New York, and then attended St. Augustine's College in Raleigh, North Carolina, where he met Atkins' mother. After serving in the U.S. Army during World War II, Atkins' father studied at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. He completed his residency at Edwards Memorial Hospital in Oklahoma City.

Video Oral History Interview with Charles N. Atkins, Section A2016\_040\_001\_002, TRT: 2:28:34 ?

Charles N. Atkins' maternal great-grandfather, Jefferson Davis Diggs, was a prominent minister in the A.M.E. Zion church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. He later helped found the Holiness church, and emphasized the value of education to his children. Atkins' maternal grandparents, Mabel Kennedy Diggs and James T. Diggs, Sr., both attended the Slater Industrial and State Normal School in Winston-Salem. They sent Atkins' mother, Hannah Diggs Atkins, and her siblings to college, and all of them earned graduate degrees. Atkins lived in the Edwards Addition housing projects in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma until the age of six years old. At that time, many of the city's prominent African Americans moved to a rural section of the city, where a white man was selling large plots of land. As a child, Atkins participated in sit-in protests with Oklahoma City's NAACP Youth Council, which was led by Clara Luper. In 1965, he was one of four students who integrated the Casady School and YMCA camp in Oklahoma City.

Video Oral History Interview with Charles N. Atkins, Section A2016\_040\_001\_003, TRT: 3:27:35 ?

Charles N. Atkins integrated the Casady School in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma in 1965, although the city's public schools were not integrated until the 1970s. Atkins and other African American students formed the Inner City Black Movement, which held demonstrations and meetings with school administrators to push for integration. His parents, Hannah Diggs Atkins and Charles N. Atkins, Sr., were also well known as activists in the community. His father was the first African American to serve on the Oklahoma City Council, and his mother was the chief reference librarian for the State of Oklahoma and was later elected to the Oklahoma House of Representatives. In this capacity, she became involved with the National Black Political Conventions. Atkins graduated from Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School in 1971, and then enrolled at Howard University to study under Ronald Walters. He was active in campus politics, and served as the student representative to the Howard University Board of Trustees.

Video Oral History Interview with Charles N. Atkins, Section A2016\_040\_001\_004, TRT: 4:29:21 ?

Charles N. Atkins attended the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer with his family in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. While a student at Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School, he helped found the Inner City Black Movement, a group of black students who advocated for integration and civil rights in Oklahoma City. With the group, Atkins protested against the opening of Heritage Hall, an

all-white private school, by taking over the stage at the White House Conference on Children and Youth. Atkins went on to attend the honors program at Howard University, where he received a bachelor's degree in political science. After graduating in 1975, he attended Harvard Law School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He was part of one of the school's largest African American classes, alongside Kenneth Chenault, Charles Ogletree and Theodore V. Wells, Jr. During the summers, Atkins interned at the Washington, D.C. office of Akin Gump Strauss Hauer and Feld LLP, as well as the law firm of Butler and Binion in Houston, Texas.

Video Oral History Interview with Charles N. Atkins, Section A2016\_040\_001\_005, TRT: 5:20:31  
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Charles N. Atkins graduated from Harvard Law School in 1978, and then joined the law firm of Akin Gump Strauss Hauer and Feld LLP in Washington, D.C. There, he worked with Vernon E. Jordan, Jr., Edward S. Knight and one of the founding partners, Robert S. Strauss. Through his colleague, Joel Jankowski, Atkins learned about an opening at the White House, and was hired to work in the Office of Public Liaison under Anne Wexler in 1980. While there, he was instrumental in bringing Zimbabwe's Prime Minister Robert Mugabe to meet President Jimmy Carter at the White House. Atkins went on to serve as legislative counsel to Oklahoma's senior senator, David Boren. During this time, Atkins met Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill at a Christmas party with mutual friends. In 1983, Atkins joined the staff of the Democratic Party Platform Committee. There, he and Susan Estrich developed the party platform, and oversaw the campaigns of Reverend Jesse L. Jackson and Walter Mondale.

Video Oral History Interview with Charles N. Atkins, Section A2016\_040\_001\_006, TRT: 6:08:02  
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Charles N. Atkins narrates his photographs.