

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Stephen L. Williams

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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>	Williams, Stephen, 1956-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Stephen L. Williams,
<b>Dates:</b>	November 28, 2016
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2016
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:41:45).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Government administrator Stephen L. Williams (1956 - ) served as administrator of public health and deputy director of Travis County's Health and Human Services and Veteran Service Department in Austin, Texas, before becoming the director of public health for the Houston Department of Health and Human Services in 2004. Williams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 28, 2016, in Houston, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2016_117
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Government administrator Stephen L. Williams was born on June 10, 1956, in Waycross, Georgia to Loretta Williams and Rosebud Smith, Sr. Williams graduated from Waycross High School in 1974, and earned his B.A. degree in sociology and social work from Huntingdon College in Montgomery, Alabama in 1977. He went on to receive his M.Ed. degree from Auburn University at Montgomery, and his M.P.A. degree from Baruch College, City University of New

York, through the National Urban Fellowship program.

Beginning in 1995, Williams served as an administrator of public health and deputy director of Travis County's Health and Human Services and Veteran Service Department in Austin, Texas. He became the director of public health for the Houston Department of Health and Human Services in 2004. Under his administration, the department launched community outreach programs such as Project Saving Smiles, which provided oral screenings to elementary school students; See to Succeed, which partnered with private organizations to provide children with eye exams and glasses; and Assessment, Intervention, and Mobilization (AIM), a door-to-door responsive services program. In 2006, Williams initiated the Hip Hop for HIV Awareness intervention project. He also collaborated with Enroll Gulf Coast to consult Houstonians on accessing health insurance through the Affordable Care Act of 2010. Williams also served as an adjunct professor for the University Of Texas School of Public Health.

Williams served on numerous boards and organizations. He was chairman of the Texas Department of State Health Services Public Funding and Policy Committee, the Coalition of the Homeless of Houston/Harris County and the Harris County System of Hope. He served on the National Commission on Prevention Priorities, the Texas A&M School of Rural Public Health External Advisory Board, the Texas Agri-Life Extension Services Urban Advisory Board, and the Harris County Healthcare Alliance Board. Williams was a member of the National Association of City and County Health Officials, American Public Health Association, Rotary Club of Houston, and the National Forum for Black Public Administrators. Williams also served as president of the Texas Association of Local Health Officials.

Stephen L. Williams was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on November 28, 2016.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Stephen L. Williams was conducted by Denise Gines on November 28, 2016, in Houston, Texas, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Government administrator Stephen L. Williams (1956 - ) served as administrator of public health and deputy director of Travis County's Health and Human Services and Veteran Service Department in Austin, Texas, before becoming the director of public health for the Houston Department of Health and Human Services in 2004.

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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:

Williams, Stephen, 1956-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

## **Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## **Occupations:**

City Government Administrator

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

CivicMakers

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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 Stephen L. Williams, November 28, 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 2/5/2020 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following

## 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 Stephen L. Williams, Section A2016\_117\_001\_001, TRT: 1:26:32 2016/11/28

Stephen L. Williams was born on June 10, 1956 in Waycross, Georgia to Loretta Williams and Rosebud Smith, Sr. His mother graduated high school in Waycross before working full time as a maid at the Ware County Hotel. She and Williams' father separated, and Williams was raised by his mother and maternal grandmother, although he saw his father intermittently. He and his four siblings walked across contaminated land in order to attend Reidsville School. When Williams was eight years old, he met his maternal great-uncle, Buddy Williams, who had spent thirty years in a state psychiatric institution. Williams' uncle moved in with the family then, and became a mentor and confidant. Williams was also mentored by J.B. Meritt, a friend who encouraged him to start his first job as a paperboy at eleven years old. When Williams entered the fifth grade, he was in the first class to desegregate Gilchrist Park Elementary School. While other African Americans attended the school, he was the only black student in his class.

Video Oral History Interview with Stephen L. Williams, Section A2016\_117\_001\_002, TRT: 2:28:38 2016/11/28

Stephen L. Williams belonged to the congregation at Zachary Holiness Church in WayCross, Georgia with his mother, Loretta Williams, and maternal grandmother.

From a young age, he delivered newspapers, and used the extra money to buy Christmas gifts for his siblings. Williams was required to walk or carpool from the Newtown area of Waycross to attend Center Junior High School, which was a few miles away. His father, Rosebud Smith, Sr., bought him a car when he entered Waycross High School. There, he joined football team, and worked at restaurants in the off season. During the summers, he harvested and sold tobacco in North Carolina, where he earned approximately ten dollars a day. Williams hoped to join the U.S. Army after high school, but was convinced by his family to pursue a college degree instead. Upon graduating from Waycross High School in 1974, he enrolled at Huntingdon College, which was a small, predominantly white school in Montgomery, Alabama. There, he majored in sociology and social work.

Video Oral History Interview with Stephen L. Williams, Section A2016\_117\_001\_003, TRT: 3:28:32 2016/11/28

Stephen L. Williams attended Huntingdon College in Montgomery, Alabama, and interned at the Alabama Industrial School for Boys and the Veterans' Administration. After completing his degree in 1977, he was hired at the Montgomery Area Mental Health Authority, Inc. as a day treatment counselor, and was later promoted to director of the day treatment program. During this time, Williams earned a master's degree in education at Auburn University at Montgomery, where he was mentored by Professor Robert C. Bender. Over the following three years, he started coursework for a second master's degree in personnel administration at Auburn University at Montgomery, which he then completed at Baruch College in New York City in 1984 through the National Urban Fellows program. He also interned in Maricopa County, Arizona, and was hired there as the special assistant to the public health director at the end of the fellowship. Williams met his wife, Carolyn Williams, at that time and his daughter was born in 1987.

Video Oral History Interview with Stephen L. Williams, Section A2016\_117\_001\_004, TRT: 4:28:38 2016/11/28

Stephen L. Williams served as the interim assistant director of community development in Maricopa County,

Arizona in 1989. When offered a permanent position, he declined in order to focus on public health. Williams then joined the health and human services department, where he created public nursing and pregnancy outreach programs as well as an epidemiology unit. In 1990, he moved to Austin, Texas to serve as the deputy director of programs and services at the Austin/Travis County Department of Health and Human Services. Soon after, he took on the additional role of executive manager of health, human services and veteran services. In this capacity, Williams developed a juvenile crime prevention strategy, and worked to improve interactions between the police and the mentally ill. In 2004, Williams was hired at the Department of Health and Human Services in Houston, Texas, where he created the Assessment, Intervention, and Mobilization initiative, and the Healthy Families Houston program for first time parents.

Video Oral History Interview with Stephen L. Williams, Section A2016\_117\_001\_005, TRT: 5:28:29 2016/11/28

Stephen L. Williams partnered with OneSight to provide free eye screenings for children in Houston, Texas. When OneSight was forced to lessen the number of screenings due to budget constraints, Williams led the Houston Department of Health and Human Services in partnering with other local organizations to offer screenings several times a year. He also organized the Project Saving Smiles dental health project, which treated nine thousand children in a single year. During his tenure as director, Williams sought to increase Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 enrollment through an initiative called Enroll Gulf Coast. His department also worked with mental health professionals and the Houston Police Department to decrease negative interactions between police and mentally ill residents by 30 percent. In order to better serve Houston's diverse communities, Williams introduced specialized programs like Hip Hop for HIV Awareness Intervention and Diabetes Awareness and Wellness Network.

Video Oral History Interview with Stephen L. Williams, Section A2016\_117\_001\_006, TRT: 6:20:56 2016/11/28

Stephen L. Williams led the Houston Department of

Health and Human Services in carrying out the goals of the My Brother's Keeper program initiated by President Barack Obama. During his long career in public health administration, Williams received numerous honors, including the Marks of Excellence Award from the National Forum for Black Public Administrators. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame for the Texas Labor Management Conference, and was selected to participate in the Executive Leadership Institute. Williams also served on several boards, including the Houston Coalition for the Homeless and the Texas Association of City and County Health Officials, both of which he served as president. At this point, Williams talks about his family, and shares advice for future generations. He also reflects upon his life, and describes his plans for the future. Williams concludes the interview by describing how he would like to be remembered.