

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Reverend Dr. Floyd Flake

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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>	Flake, Floyd
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Dr. Floyd Flake,
<b>Dates:</b>	September 15, 2001
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2001
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:41:35).
<b>Abstract:</b>	U.S. congressman and minister The Honorable Reverend Dr. Floyd Flake (1945 - ) is the pastor of The Greater Allen Cathedral of New York and a former member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Under Flake's leadership, the church's membership has grown to more than 13,000, complete with a private school, senior citizens center and hundreds of housing units for its members and other community residents. Flake was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 15, 2001, in Queens, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2001_032
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Reverend Dr. Floyd H. Flake was born on January 30, 1945. He grew up in segregated Houston as one of fifteen children to Robert Flake, Sr. and Rosie Lee Johnson-Flake. Their small two bedroom house lacked running water. Flake was heavily influenced by his parents' strong moral beliefs and by excellent teachers who challenged him.

After high school, Flake attended Wilberforce University, obtaining his B.A. in 1967 and becoming the first member of his family to graduate from college. After graduation, Flake served as a social worker and then as a marketing analyst with Xerox Corporation.

He was recruited to serve as Director of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Afro-American Center in Boston University. Then in 1976, he was asked to head the Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church (now The Greater Allen Cathedral of New York) in Jamaica, Queens, New York. At the time, the church had 1,400 members. Under Flake's leadership, the church's membership has grown to more than 23,000, complete with a private school, senior citizens center and hundreds of housing units for its members and other community residents. Allen A.M.E. Church has become one of the United States' largest non-profit corporations and the second largest African American employer in New York City.

Flake was elected and served as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1986-97, while still leading Allen A.M.E. Church. In Congress, Floyd established a reputation for bi-partisanship. He also led several initiatives to revitalize urban commercial and residential communities. Flake left Congress, in the midst of his sixth term, to devote his time and energy solely to the pastorate of The Greater Allen Cathedral of New York.

In addition to his duties as Senior Pastor of Allen Cathedral, Flake serves as President of Edison Charter Schools

and as a member of several prominent organizations including the Fannie Mae Foundation Board, the Brookings Institute, The Initiative for a Competitive Inner City and the Princeton Review Foundation.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Reverend Dr. Floyd Flake was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on September 15, 2001, in Queens, New York, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. U.S. congressman and minister The Honorable Reverend Dr. Floyd Flake (1945 - ) is the pastor of The Greater Allen Cathedral of New York and a former member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Under Flake's leadership, the church's membership has grown to more than 13,000, complete with a private school, senior citizens center and hundreds of housing units for its members and other community residents.

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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:

Flake, Floyd

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Flake, Floyd--Interviews

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African American clergy--New York (State)--New York--Queens--Interviews.

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African American politicians--New York (State)--Interviews.

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African American legislators--New York (State)--Interviews.

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Passing (Identity)--United States.

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Washington, Booker T., 1856-1915.

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Allen, Richard, 1760-1831.

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African Americans--Texas--Social conditions--20th century.

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Discipline of children--Psychological aspects.

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Racism--Texas--Houston.

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Wilberforce University.

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African Methodist Episcopal Church--Clergy--Interviews.

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African American Methodists--New York (State)--New York.

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Boston University.

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Elections--United States.

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United States. Congress. House.

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Governmental investigations--United States.

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Congressional Black Caucus.

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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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New York

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African Methodist Episcopal Church

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# Occupations:

U.S. Congressman

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Minister

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# HistoryMakers® Category:

PoliticalMakers|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 The Honorable Reverend Dr. Floyd Flake, September 15, 2001. 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 The Honorable Reverend Dr. Floyd Flake, Section A2001\_032\_001\_001, TRT: 0:31:11 ?

Reverend Flake discusses in his book, The Way of the Bootstrapper, the self help models used by Booker T. Washington and Richard Allen. He discusses his family and how distant family denied their black heritage and passed for white, even going so far as altering their last name. Later, he recalls how his grandparents' religious influence played a role in his upbringing in Texas. Flake

then gives extensive recollections on his father's workaholic habits and his mother's shortened life brought on by giving birth to many children. Lastly, Flake recalls his earliest childhood memory at age three

African American clergy--New York (State)--New York--Interviews.

African American politicians--New York (State)--Interviews.

African American legislators--New York (State)--Interviews.

Passing (Identity)--United States.

Washington, Booker T., 1856-1915.

Allen, Richard, 1760-1831.

African Americans--Texas--Social conditions--20th century.

Discipline of children--Psychological aspects.

Racism--Texas--Houston.

Wilberforce University.

African Methodist Episcopal Church--Clergy--Interviews.

African American Methodists--New York (State)--New York.

Boston University.

Elections--United States.

United States. Congress. House.

Governmental investigations--United States.

Congressional Black Caucus.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Dr. Floyd Flake, Section  
A2001\_032\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:53 ?

Reverend Flake details the living arrangements in the new house his father purchased in Texas. He describes his personality as a child and a life-altering punishment he received from his father. Later he reflects on the lessons he learned as a young boy when his health forced him to stay home from school for six months. Flake then recalls his life in one of Houston's many segregated wards and his decision to leave Texas to attend Wilberforce University in Ohio after being wrongly arrested. Lastly, Flake gives a listing of all the schools he attended, leading up to his attendance at Wilberforce.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Dr. Floyd Flake, Section  
A2001\_032\_001\_003, TRT: 0:31:12 ?

Reverend Flake describes the many jobs he held from the age of nineteen until his arrival at Boston University where he held three positions simultaneously. He discusses the advantages of attending a black college and his children's choice to do the same. Flake then details his pastoral assignments in Boston and the decision to preach in New York. Reverend Flake reflects on his early years at the Greater Allen Cathedral and the changes made in the neighborhood. Lastly, Flake recalls his community urging him to run for a political office.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Dr. Floyd Flake, Section  
A2001\_032\_001\_004, TRT: 0:31:01 ?

Reverend Flake talks about his run for Congress despite not having any political experience, and the lifestyle adjustments he and his family had to make. Flake talks about his reluctance to run for office and his court battle after being left off the ballot. After winning the election in 1987, Flake recalls his experiences in the House of Representatives and what he did to help his constituency. Flake recounts being the subject of a legal investigation and the lessons he learned about being in the political spotlight. Reverend Flake recalls his dealings with the Congressional Black Caucus and how he made political decisions based on

his personal beliefs.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Dr. Floyd Flake, Section  
A2001\_032\_001\_005, TRT: 0:31:02 ?

Reverend Flake discusses the purpose of the Congressional Black Caucus and how it compares with his political belief system. Flake then recalls the best accomplishments of his eleven-year career as a Congressman. Later he explains why he needed to return to the pulpit and oversee the building of Greater Allen Cathedral. Flake details his involvement with the Edison Charter Schools and the pros and cons of faith-based initiatives. Lastly, he discusses the role of the black church and its community, black identity and his definition of poverty.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Dr. Floyd Flake, Section  
A2001\_032\_001\_006, TRT: 0:06:16 ?

Reverend Flake continues to discuss the concept of poverty in the black community and reflects on the A.M.E. Church tradition. Lastly, Flake identifies the photographs he provided.