

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Thomas W. Dortch, Jr.

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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>	Dortch, Thomas W.
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Thomas W. Dortch, Jr.,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 12, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:15:45).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Civic leader Thomas W. Dortch, Jr. (1950 - ) led 100 Black Men of Atlanta, Inc. Dortch was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 12, 2002, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_018
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Thomas W. Dortch, Jr. was born April 12, 1950 in Toccoa, Georgia to Lizzie Dortch and Thomas W. Dortch, Sr. Dortch, Jr. went on to become an influential leader and mentor as well as a successful businessman.

After graduating from Whitman Street High School in 1968, Dortch attended Fort Valley State University in Fort Valley, Georgia and graduated with a B.A. in sociology in 1972. That year, he began his formal career by seeking to aid disenfranchised people through proposing projects for the State of Georgia. In 1974, he became the associate director of the Georgia Democratic Party. In 1978, Dortch began working as an administrative aide for U.S. Senator Sam Nunn and eventually became State Director, the first African American to serve in this position. Dortch worked tirelessly to represent the interests of small businesses, minorities, and other marginalized individuals.

Dortch became civically active during these years, and in 1986 joined 100 Black Men of America, a mentoring program intended to improve the quality of life and opportunities for education and employment for African Americans. He served as chairman of 100 Black Men of Atlanta and became the chairman of 100 Black Men of America's national board of directors. That same year, he earned his M.A. in Criminal Justice Administration from Clark Atlanta University and married Carole Dortch. He also founded the National Black College Alumni Hall of Fame.

In 1994, after more than 16 years of government service, Dortch left his position to pursue his own business interests. He became CEO of the consulting firm TWD, Inc. and Atlanta Transportation Systems, Inc., a Fulton County paratransit company. He still holds both positions.

Thomas Dortch has won numerous awards highlighting his achievements, including a Presidential Citation for volunteerism, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Distinguished Service Award, and the Concerned Black Clergy's Salute to Black Fathers Leadership Award. Dortch has four children.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Thomas W. Dortch, Jr. was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on March 12, 2002, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civic leader Thomas W. Dortch, Jr. (1950 - ) led 100 Black Men of Atlanta, Inc.

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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:

Dortch, Thomas W.

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Dortch, Thomas W.--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:

Civic Leader

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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 Thomas W. Dortch, Jr., March 12, 2002. 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 Thomas W. Dortch, Jr., Section A2002\_018\_001\_001, TRT: 0:31:19 ?

Thomas Dortch narrates his photographs

Video Oral History Interview with Thomas W. Dortch, Jr., Section A2002\_018\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:40 ?

Thomas Dortch was born in 1950 in Toccoa, Georgia, to Elizabeth Dortch from LaGrange, Georgia, and Thomas Dortch, Sr., born in 1919 in Toccoa, Georgia. He is the youngest of six siblings: John, Juanita, Marie, Carolyn, and Richard. His mother was a housekeeper who returned to school as an adult to becoming a

childcare specialist, and his father was an entrepreneur, owning and operating pawn shops and restaurants throughout Georgia and North Carolina. His mother was loving and nurturing, as well as being a disciplinarian. His father was well-respected in his community and encouraged his children to become educated. Dortch grew up in the segregated town of Toccoa, Georgia, and credits the adults in his life for encouraging and mentoring him and his peers to succeed. While he experienced overt racism in his rural Southern upbringing in the 1950s, he recalls early memories of Toccoa, Georgia, of being instilled with a sense of community and support by the adults in his life.

Video Oral History Interview with Thomas W. Dortch, Jr., Section A2002\_018\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:31 ?

Thomas Dortch grew up in the segregated town of Toccoa, Georgia, and credits the adults in his life for encouraging and mentoring him and his peers. He attended the segregated Whitman Street School from elementary through high school, and then attended Fort Valley State University in Georgia. He was a good student, becoming salutatorian and student government president at Whitman Street High School, as well as playing on the basketball team. He had many influential teachers and mentors throughout elementary school, high school, and college, and he describes in detail their influence on his life. Dortch grew up in a rural community where, although only ten percent of the population was African American, he felt supported by a variety of adults in his community. He reflects on his rural upbringing, going to church with his family, and playing sports with his peers growing up in Toccoa, Georgia.

Video Oral History Interview with Thomas W. Dortch, Jr., Section A2002\_018\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:27 ?

Thomas Dortch attended Fort Valley State University in Georgia from 1968 to 1972, where he graduated with a degree in sociology. He was elected student body president his senior year, when he became active not only in college politics, but also Georgia state politics. As student body president, Dortch worked to get speakers such as HistoryMaker Julian Bond and HistoryMaker Representative John Lewis involved on campus. He brought the Alpha Phi Omega Service Fraternity to Fort Valley State University, which was the first major chapter at a Historically Black College. He also was involved with Fort Valley City politics, while registering black voters. His senior year, he was recruited to campaign as a Delegate to Georgia's Democratic National Convention under Representative Shirley Chisolm. He lost the seat to future President Jimmy Carter by fifteen votes. At Fort Valley State University, he switched his major from math to sociology, and credits studying sociology as well as his political career with preparing him for his Ford Fellowship at Georgia State University after graduation.

Video Oral History Interview with Thomas W. Dortch, Jr., Section A2002\_018\_001\_005, TRT: 0:31:14 ?

Thomas Dortch worked at the Appalachian Childcare Project after graduating from Fort Valley State University in 1972. He was then appointed the associate director of the Georgia Democratic Party in 1974, where he met Senator Sam Nunn. Under the advice of friends HistoryMaker Julian Bond and HistoryMaker Representative John Lewis and from Governor George Busbee, in 1978, Dortch began to work with Senator Nunn as an administrative aide. He eventually was appointed the first African American state director in Georgia under Senator Nunn in 1990. He worked on numerous state and national projects, including the 1992 Bill Clinton presidential campaign. He reflects on what he learned about politics and business throughout his public service career in Georgia, as well as

the growth of African American political leadership through the 1980s and 1990s. Dortch left his political career in 1995 to start his own business, TWD, Inc. consulting firm.

Video Oral History Interview with Thomas W. Dortch, Jr., Section A2002\_018\_001\_006, TRT: 0:30:21 ?

Thomas Dortch left politics in 1995, and started several businesses, including the consulting firm, TWD, Inc., and the Atlanta Transformation Systems. Despite developing business growth in Georgia during his political career, he experienced initial challenges in attracting clients, though he retained Senator Sam Nunn's business. He successfully started and ran several businesses at this time. In 1986, Dortch became involved with the 100 Black Men organization, developing the Atlanta, Georgia chapter. In Atlanta, he led the organization to sponsor students' education at Archer High School in 1987, funding their college careers. In 1994, he was elected national president of the 100 Black Men. He describes the multiple programs he instituted, and the process of constructing their national headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. Dortch reflects on the difference between his organization and the Million Man March, and talks about his plans for the future for the 100 Black Men organization.

Video Oral History Interview with Thomas W. Dortch, Jr., Section A2002\_018\_001\_007, TRT: 0:12:13 ?

Thomas Dortch was diagnosed with cancer in 1988, adenocarcinoma of the small intestine, which he describes as the biggest challenge he faced in his life. The treatment and recovery process allowed him to reflect on his career and his work with the 100 Black Men. He talks about his hopes for his future, with intentions to grow his business and help support fellow business members of the African American community. He reflects on what he wants his legacy to be, wishing to be remembered for his work helping and supporting the black community.