

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Leander Shaw

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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>	Shaw, Leander, Jr., 1930-2015
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Leander Shaw,
<b>Dates:</b>	April 19, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:59:54).
<b>Abstract:</b>	State supreme court judge The Honorable Leander Shaw (1930 - 2015 ) worked as both an assistant public defender and an assistant state's attorney in Jacksonville, Florida. His skill as a prosecutor is evident in Shaw's win/loss record: he prosecuted forty-two murder cases, and only lost one case. In 1979, Shaw was appointed to the bench, and presided over Florida's First District Court of Appeal. Just four years later, Shaw received appointment as a Justice of the Supreme Court of Florida, where he served as the Chief Justice from 1990-1992 Shaw was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 19, 2002, in Tallahassee, Florida. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_065
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Florida Supreme Court Justice Leander Shaw, Jr. was born on September 6, 1930, in Salem, Virginia. His mother was a high school teacher and his father a high school principal, who later became the dean of Graduate Studies at Florida A&M University. Shaw earned a B.A. from West Virginia State College in 1952. After graduating, Shaw entered the Army and served in the Korean conflict as an artillery officer. Motivated by the blatant racism he experienced in the military and inspired by the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement in the South, Shaw returned to school, and received his J.D. degree from Howard University's School of Law in 1957.

Shaw taught at Florida A&M University's Law School from 1957 to 1960 before entering private practice. While continuing private practice, Shaw also worked as both an assistant public defender and an assistant state's attorney in Jacksonville, Florida. His skill as a prosecutor was evident in his win/loss record: he prosecuted forty-two murder cases, only losing once. In 1979, Shaw was appointed to the bench, and presided over Florida's First District Court of Appeal. Just four years later, Shaw received an appointment as a Justice of the Supreme Court of Florida, where he served as the Chief Justice from 1990 to 1992. Shaw openly opposed Florida's continued use of the electric chair. In response to the 1999 execution of Allen Lee "Tiny" Davis, Shaw posted three-color photos taken after the event on his web site.

Shaw served on a number of advisory boards and was a member of various professional and community associations, including the American Bar Association, the National Center for State Courts, and Florida's Human Relations Council and Police Advisory Committee. Shaw's work extended into the international sphere as well. In September of 1991, he presented a paper at the Conference of Attorneys General of the African Nations held in

Nigeria. He was granted honorary degrees from West Virginia State (LL.D.), Florida International University (Ph.D.), Nova University (LL.D), and Washington and Lee University (LL.D.) and was the recipient of such prestigious awards as the Florida Humanist of the Year (1991), and the Ben Franklin Award (1992).

Supreme Court Justice Leander Shaw, Jr. was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on April 19, 2002.

Shaw passed away on December 25, 2015.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Leander Shaw was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on April 19, 2002, in Tallahassee, Florida, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. State supreme court judge The Honorable Leander Shaw (1930 - 2015 ) worked as both an assistant public defender and an assistant state's attorney in Jacksonville, Florida. His skill as a prosecutor is evident in Shaw's win/loss record: he prosecuted forty-two murder cases, and only lost one case. In 1979, Shaw was appointed to the bench, and presided over Florida's First District Court of Appeal. Just four years later, Shaw received appointment as a Justice of the Supreme Court of Florida, where he served as the Chief Justice from 1990-1992

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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:

Shaw, Leander, Jr., 1930-2015

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Shaw, Leander, Jr., 1930-2015--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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Florida

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## Occupations:

State Supreme Court Judge

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

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 The Honorable Leander Shaw, April 19, 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.

## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Leander Shaw, Section A2002\_065\_001\_001, TRT: 0:31:09 ?

Florida Supreme Court Justice Leander J. Shaw recalls his family background and describes the lives of his mother and father. Shaw shares memories from his childhood in Lexington, Virginia, explaining the town's race relations, recalling family life, and describing his personality and favorite activities.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Leander Shaw, Section A2002\_065\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:06 ?

Florida Supreme Court Justice Leander J. Shaw shares vivid memories of his family life when he was a child in Lexington, Virginia and recalls his childhood aspirations. Shaw describes his school years, including his favorite recreations and his involvement in athletics. Shaw then recounts his experiences as an undergraduate at West Virginia State University, describing his studies of political science and history and naming influential professors.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Leander Shaw, Section A2002\_065\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:37 ?

Florida Supreme Court Justice Leander J. Shaw discusses his stint in the military and describes the Army's racial climate during the 1950s. Shaw then recounts his time in law school, first attending Brooklyn Law School and then transferring to Howard University School of Law, where he found a better social and academic environment for him. Shaw discusses his early career, including teaching at Florida A&M University and his participation in the NAACP Ink Fund.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Leander Shaw, Section A2002\_065\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:23 ?

Florida Supreme Court Justice Leander J. Shaw details his career progression, including his private practice and his tenure as public defender of Duval County, Florida. He explains how his many capital crime trials in front of juries helped him develop as a lawyer. Shaw also recounts Civil Rights Movement conflicts in St. Augustine, Florida, including demonstrations by black youths, attempts to desegregate public accommodations, and mass arrests of protestors.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Leander Shaw, Section A2002\_065\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:26 ?

Florida Supreme Court Justice Leander J. Shaw recalls the advancement of his career, from his appointment as a judge to the First District Court of Appeal of Duval County, Florida, to his appointment as justice to the Florida Supreme Court. Shaw explains the differences between the courts and how he had to adapt to the changes. He then details episodes from his tenure on the Florida Supreme Court, such as a case involving access to abortion for minors.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Leander Shaw, Section A2002\_065\_001\_006, TRT: 0:29:14 ?

Florida Supreme Court Justice Leander J. Shaw recounts his campaign to retain his seat on the Florida Supreme Court and discusses Florida's judicial retention system. Shaw then discusses Florida's death penalty policy, recalling his initiative to educate the public on the costs and effects of capital punishment. Shaw then details the role of the Florida Supreme Court in the controversial 2000 Presidential election, dismissing claims that the court was politically

biased.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Leander Shaw, Section A2002\_065\_001\_007,  
TRT: 0:30:28 ?

Florida Supreme Court Justice Leander J. Shaw discusses the court proceedings involved in the controversial 2000 presidential elections, explaining the process at the state and federal level. Shaw evaluates the long-term impact of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision, saying that it changed the relationship between state and federal courts. He then reflects on his life and career and voices his concern about the increasing gap between the rich and poor in the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Leander Shaw, Section A2002\_065\_001\_008,  
TRT: 0:29:31 ?

Florida Supreme Court Justice Leander J. Shaw discusses problems facing African Americans concerning access to education and employment, particularly in terms of law careers. He advocates for fairness in administering the death penalty and considers the positive impact of affirmative action on law school admission. Finally, Shaw reflects on his success and considers his legacy.