

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Reverend Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr.

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Goode, W. Wilson
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr.,
Dates:	September 7, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:58:13).
Abstract:	Mayor The Honorable Reverend Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr. (1938 -) was the first African American appointed as managing director of Philadelphia. Goode was later elected mayor of Philadelphia in 1983, and served two terms before going on to earn his doctorate of ministry in May 2000. Goode was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 7, 2002, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2002_184
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

The son of sharecroppers, W. Wilson Goode rose from a life of abject poverty to become the first black mayor of Philadelphia. Born near Seaboard, North Carolina, in 1938, Goode's family migrated north following the war to Philadelphia. After graduating from John Bartman High School, Goode became the first member of his family to attend college when he enrolled in Morgan State University. He received his B.A. in political science in 1961. In the early 1960s, he worked as a probation officer, insurance claims adjustor and building maintenance firm supervisor before serving a tour of duty in the U.S. Army in 1962. In 1968, he earned a master's degree in governmental administration from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business.

Goode's political career took shape in 1969 when he was appointed executive director of the Philadelphia Council for Community Advancement. The council's mission was to revitalize neighborhoods and create affordable housing for the poorer citizens of Philadelphia. It was a position Goode took to immediately and one that earned him a great deal of notoriety. During his tenure, he organized outreach programs in education, employment and economic development. In 1979, the mayor of Philadelphia appointed Goode as head of the Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission. While chairman of the commission, he had the unenviable task of investigating the accident at Three Mile Island. In 1980, he became the first African American appointed to the position of managing director of Philadelphia. His hands-on approach to city problems, such as sanitation and urban decay, further increased his popularity. Goode was elected mayor of Philadelphia in 1983. His support reached across racial and economic lines and he served two terms as mayor, leaving office in 1992.

Goode remains a pillar of the Philadelphia community. He received his doctorate of ministry in May 2000. He is the senior adviser on faith-based initiatives and serves as chairman of the Free Library of Philadelphia. He and his wife, Velma, reside in Philadelphia.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Reverend Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on September 7, 2002, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Mayor The Honorable Reverend Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr. (1938 -) was the first African American appointed as managing director of Philadelphia. Goode was later elected mayor of Philadelphia in 1983, and served two terms before going on to earn his doctorate of ministry in May 2000.

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®.

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.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Goode, W. Wilson

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Bieschke, Paul (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Goode, W. Wilson--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Philadelphia (Pa.)

Occupations:

Mayor

HistoryMakers® Category:

PoliticalMakers

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. W. Wilson Goode, Sr., September 7, 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).

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 Reverend Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr., Section A2002_184_001_001, TRT: 0:30:15 ?

W. Wilson Goode talks about his family history. Goode was born on August 19, 1938 in Seaboard, North Carolina to Albert and Rozelar Goode. His father was a

product of incestual rape and born on December 25th, 1903 in Northhampton County, North Carolina. His father was raised by relatives and could not read or write. His maternal grandmother was half-Cherokee and his maternal grandfather was a freed slave. His mother told him stories of blacks being terrorized by white night riders and working for descendants of slave owners who treated them poorly. As sharecroppers, Goode's family moved nearly every year of his childhood as his father sought just treatment from landowners. Goode describes segregation under Jim Crow and how passivity was necessary for black people in order to survive. Growing up in abject poverty, Goode describes living with no insulation, heat, electricity, or indoor plumbing. He began farming at age five and helped his family to grow tobacco, cotton, and peanuts.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr., Section A2002_184_001_002, TRT: 0:30:47 ?

W. Wilson Goode talks about his early life and moving to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Goode's parents motivated him to pursue education and achieve in order to have a better life than they did. In Seaboard, North Carolina, Goode walked one to five miles a day to attend one-room schoolhouses. Although his household had few books, Goode enjoyed reading, particularly about cities where he imagined an easier life. Goode describes himself as a mischievous child who was bored with rural life. His father worked on the farm during the week, but drank heavily and became violent on the weekends. After his father was jailed for a violent episode, the family moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Initially Goode was left behind to finish his education, but an antagonistic relationship with his cousin led him to leave as well. Goode describes living in an overcrowded apartment, winning a fight with a neighborhood bully, and transferring to John Bartram High School where he attended school with whites for the first time.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr., Section A2002_184_001_003, TRT: 0:30:06 ?

W. Wilson Goode describes his guidance counselor's low expectations of him. The guidance counselor told Goode that he was not college material and that he would embarrass his parents and church if he tried. After graduating from John Bartram High School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Goode worked at the American Tobacco Company. With support from his church, Goode became the first member of his family to attend college when he enrolled in Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland. Goode earned high grades and made the dean's list while studying history under August Meier and Benjamin Quarles. Goode met and married his wife while in college. He comments on the segregation of Baltimore, Maryland compared to Philadelphia. Goode received his B.A. degree in political science from Morgan State University in 1961.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr., Section A2002_184_001_004, TRT: 0:30:05 ?

W. Wilson Goode talks about his career trajectory. He served a tour of duty in the U.S. Army in 1962 winning an Army Commendation medal. He then worked as a probation officer, insurance claims adjustor at Allstate Insurance Company and building maintenance firm supervisor. Goode's political career took off in 1969 when he was appointed executive director of the Philadelphia Council for Community Advancement where he worked for twelve years until 1978. The council's mission was to revitalize neighborhoods and create affordable housing for the poorer citizens of Philadelphia. During his tenure, he organized outreach programs in education, employment and economic development. In 1979, Philadelphia Mayor Bill Green appointed Goode as head of the Pennsylvania

Public Utilities Commission. While chairman of the commission, he investigated the nuclear meltdown accident at Three Mile Island. In 1980, he became the first African American appointed to the position of managing director of Philadelphia. His hands-on approach to city problems, such as sanitation and urban decay, further increased his popularity. As speculation of a mayoral run grew, Goode decided to run for office.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr., Section A2002_184_001_005, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

W. Wilson Goode describes his historic election as the first African American Mayor of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1983. Among the third wave of African Americans elected mayor of large cities in the 1980s, Goode capitalized on the independent leaning electorate in Philadelphia, the support of black churches, white liberals, and Jews. In order to win, Goode knew that he needed to win ninety-five percent of the black vote and twenty percent of the white vote which he did. His election was particularly meaningful to the older generation of African Americans. Goode describes how he was able to defeat Frank Rizzo through his ability to organize. Goode served two terms as mayor, leaving office in 1992.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Reverend Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr., Section A2002_184_001_006, TRT: 0:26:50 ?

W. Wilson Goode reflects upon his accomplishments and regrets as Mayor of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Among his accomplishments, he cites the appointment of African Americans in high level government positions, giving \$250 million in government contracts to African American businesses, developing Philadelphia's downtown area, implementing an anti-graffiti program that encouraged youth to paint murals, and bringing cable to the city of Philadelphia. His regret is the bombing of MOVE, a black organization, by police which led to death and fire destruction in the neighborhood. While Goode did not approve those actions, he takes responsibility for sending the police instead of trying to negotiate with the MOVE organization. Goode wants to be remembered for his works of helping the children of incarcerated parents and his other contributions rather than the MOVE incident. Goode concludes by reflecting upon his legacy.