

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Dr. Leon D. Finney, Jr.

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Finney, Leon, 1938-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Leon D. Finney, Jr.,
Dates:	June 16, 2003 and October 4, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002 and 2003
Physical Description:	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:20:25).
Abstract:	Pastor Reverend Dr. Leon D. Finney, Jr. (1938 - 2020) founded the Christ Apostolic Church in Chicago and serves as its pastor. In 1993, he joined the staff of the McCormick Theological Seminary as a professor and executive director of the African American Leadership Partnership, and is also the chairman of the Lincoln South Central Real Estate Group. Finney was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 16, 2003 and October 4, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2002_189
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Born in Louise, Mississippi in 1938, Rev. Leon Finney has devoted his professional life to the revitalization of urban communities. Finney is most identified with the Woodland Organization, a community development initiative. His leadership of the Woodland Organization and its \$90 million in real estate investments has served to motivate many other communities across the country to initiate similar community development programs.

Finney earned an M.A. in Economics and Urban Community Development from Goddard College; both an M.A. in Theological Studies and a Doctor of Theology degree from McCormick Theological Seminary; and both an M.A. in Public Administration and a Doctoral in Public Administration degree from Nova University.

Finney founded the Christ Apostolic Church and serves as its pastor. He has taught at the University of Chicago, Lutheran School of Theology, the University of Illinois and Northwestern University, Presbyterian College of Korea and the Theological College of the Bahamas. In 1993, he joined the staff of McCormick Theological Seminary as a professor of African American Leadership Studies and Executive Director of the African-American Leadership Partnership (AALP). Finney is also the Chairman and Principal for the Lincoln South Central Real Estate Group, Inc.

Finney has served as vice-chairman of the Chicago Public Housing Authority and chairman of the Monitoring Commission for School Desegregation for Chicago Public Schools. He has also served as a board member for the Chicago Planning Commission, Broadcast Ministers Alliance and Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions. Finney has written several publications on economic and social development in our cities, including: *Urban Disinvestment: A Counter Strategy*, for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development,

Neighborhood Economic Development-Myth or Fact, and TWO Model Cities Plan.

Finney has received various awards and honors for his professional and civic work. He married Georgette Greenlee-Finney in June 2002.

Finney passed away on September 4, 2020.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reverend Dr. Leon D. Finney, Jr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 16, 2003 and October 4, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Pastor Reverend Dr. Leon D. Finney, Jr. (1938 - 2020) founded the Christ Apostolic Church in Chicago and serves as its pastor. In 1993, he joined the staff of the McCormick Theological Seminary as a professor and executive director of the African American Leadership Partnership, and is also the chairman of the Lincoln South Central Real Estate Group.

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:

Finney, Leon, 1938-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Finney, Leon, 1938---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Civic Activist

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Reverend Dr. Leon D. Finney, Jr., June 16, 2003 and October 4, 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 Reverend Dr. Leon D. Finney, Jr., Section
A2002_189_001_001, TRT: 0:29:15 ?

Leon Finney describes his family background. His mother, Atline Tyler, was born to Ellis Tyler, the bi-racial son of a plantation owner, and Shange Jones in Louise, Mississippi. His father, Leon Finney, Sr. was born to T. J. Huddleston and Lula Dorsey in Louise, Mississippi, and bears the name of his stepfather, John Finney. Lula Dorsey was born to Patsy Dorsey, who later married bi-racial farmer Alex Montgomery, great-grandfather of HistoryMaker James D. Montgomery. T.J. Huddleston is grandfather to U.S. Congressman Mike Espy, who served as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture under the Clinton Administration. Born in 1876, Huddleston founded the Central Burial Association, a burial insurance company. He later founded Central Funeral Home, a funeral home chain of over twenty locations by the mid-1950s. In 1928, Huddleston founded Afro-American Sons & Daughters Hospital, Mississippi's first African American hospital. Leon Finney, Sr. met Atline Tyler on the Montgomery Farm, where his mother worked as a sharecropper.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Leon D. Finney, Jr., Section
A2002_189_001_002, TRT: 0:30:40 ?

Leon Finney Jr.'s father, Leon Finney, Sr., met and married Atline Tyler, in their hometown of Louise, Mississippi. They gave birth to Leon Finney, Jr. on July 7, 1939. At the time, Finney, Sr. worked in the casket factory of his father, funeral home owner T.J. Huddleston. In 1940, Finney, Sr. relocated to Chicago, Illinois to branch out from his father. Huddleston helped him purchase a restaurant, allowing Finney, Sr. to open Leon's Bar-B-Q in 1940. Atline Tyler joined him, leaving Finney, Jr. with his family members in Mississippi. After Tyler contracted tuberculosis in 1943, Finney, Sr. sent for his son. Tyler died in 1945, leaving Finney, Jr. to be raised by his family members on Chicago's South Side. Finney, Sr. remarried, and sent his son to live with his stepmother's family in Nashville, Tennessee in 1949. Finney, Jr. returned to Chicago around 1952. As a youth, he enjoyed making skateboards and roller skates, and swimming at Washington Park. In the winter, he enjoyed sledding and ice skating.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Leon D. Finney, Jr., Section
A2002_189_001_003, TRT: 0:29:15 ?

In 1943, Leon Finney's father, Leon Finney, Sr., enrolled him in Catholic School, to increase his chance for a quality education. In 1947 Finney, Jr. began attending public grammar schools on Chicago's South Side. In 1949, Finney, Sr., sent Finney, Jr. to Nashville, Tennessee to expose him to a richer educational environment. Finney, Jr. returned to Chicago, Illinois in 1953, where he was to attend Englewood Technical High School. However, Finney, Sr., used his friend's Kenwood address to enroll Finney, Jr. at Hyde Park High School, a highly competitive school. Finney, Jr. had classmates that were white, Asian, Hispanic, and Irish Catholic. He also enjoyed attending teen parties, and was a member of the school swimming and track teams. Finney also commented on his perception of the African American social landscape prior to the Civil Rights Movement, and the sub-communities of Hyde Park Township.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Leon D. Finney, Jr., Section
A2002_189_001_004, TRT: 0:30:15 ?

In 1953, Leon Finney enrolled in Hyde Park High School in Chicago, Illinois, in an integrated and competitive environment with students from Asian, Hispanic, Jewish, and Irish Catholic backgrounds. Finney was a member of an African American male social club called the Lochinvar Boys Club, where students were

selected based on merit, family background, and class. The Lochinvars' sister club, the Lassies, selected women based on these criteria, as well as color. The club did civic work, and hosted social events for its members, including a party where Dizzy Gillespie was the featured guest. Finney made lifelong friends through the club, and through his friends at Hyde Park High School, including HistoryMaker Dr. Conrad Worrill. Well known alumni of the school include HistoryMakers Herbie Hancock and Herb Kent. Leon Finney also talked about his support of Hyde Park High School, and the issues it faces today.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Leon D. Finney, Jr., Section A2002_189_002_005, TRT: 0:29:45 ?

As a youth, Leon Finney hoped to attend the University of Chicago, but applied to the University of Illinois at Navy Pier because he felt it would be easier to be accepted into. Upon graduating from Hyde Park High School in 1957, he enrolled at the University of Illinois at Navy Pier, joined the swim and wrestling teams, and became a manager for the football team. Finney struggled to balance his academics and his extracurricular activities, and dropped out after only one semester. Finney then attended Olive-Harvey College for a year, and re-enrolled at the University of Illinois at Navy Pier in 1958 for a year. He then completed two additional semesters at Woodrow Wilson College (currently Kennedy-King College) and Roosevelt University before enlisting in the U.S. Marine Corps in 1959. Finney was assigned to serve as a military policeman in the Criminal Investigation Division. Finney investigated homosexuality and sodomy under Articles 125 and 134 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, and homicides.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Leon D. Finney, Jr., Section A2002_189_002_006, TRT: 0:30:55 ?

Leon Finney enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in 1959, and served as a policeman in the Criminal Investigation Division at Camp Pendleton in California. Finney described one of the homicides he investigated, and the prestige of being a military policeman. Finney, nor his black colleagues, experienced overt discrimination on the base; however it was not uncommon for blacks to experience discrimination in the surrounding town of Oceanside, California. During his service, Finney studied cultural and physical anthropology, as well as history, at the local community college. He was also sent to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Finney's service in the U.S. Marine Corps transformed his understanding of service to others. Finney left the U.S. Marine Corps in 1963, and moved to Chicago to work at his father's barbeque restaurant, Village Barbeque, which operated the clearinghouse numbers game.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Leon D. Finney, Jr., Section A2002_189_002_007, TRT: 0:20:20 ?

Upon leaving the U.S. Marine Corps in 1963, Leon Finney returned to Chicago, Illinois to help his father, Leon Finney, Sr., run his barbeque restaurant, Village Barbeque. Finney also enrolled part time at Roosevelt University, and worked for the Social Security Administration. Finney lived at the Washington Park YMCA, but later moved to the Woodlawn neighborhood, where he volunteered for the Woodlawn Organization. In 1964, Finney was hired to buy and sell commercial paper in the trader's cage at First National Bank. Several months later, his father suffered a heart attack, and unable to take a leave of absence, he resigned from First National Bank, and took over his father's restaurants. In 1964, Finney was approached by a Woodlawn Organization community organizer, Squire Lance, about becoming an organizer. Lance convinced Finney to meet with renowned community organizer Saul Alinsky, who challenged

Finney to do more for his community. Thus, Finney accepted the community organizing position.