

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Richard Hatcher

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## Overview of the Collection

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| <b>Repository:</b>           | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616<br>info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com   |
| <b>Creator:</b>              | Hatcher, Richard G., 1933-  |
| <b>Title:</b>                | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Richard Hatcher,   |
| <b>Dates:</b>                | December 11, 2002   |
| <b>Bulk Dates:</b>           | 2002  |
| <b>Physical Description:</b> | 9 Betacame SP videocassettes (4:22:25).   |
| <b>Abstract:</b>             | Law professor and mayor The Honorable Richard Hatcher (1933 - 2019) was the first African American mayor of Gary, Indiana and host of the National Black Political Assembly. Hatcher was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 11, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| <b>Identification:</b>       | A2002_231   |
| <b>Language:</b>             | The interview and records are in English.   |

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Successful politician, social servant and educator Richard Gordon Hatcher was born on July 10, 1933, in Michigan City, Indiana. He received a B.S. degree in business and government from Indiana University in 1956, and a bachelor of law with honors in criminal law and a J.D. from Valparaiso University School of Law in 1959.

After moving to Gary, Indiana, Hatcher began practicing law in East Chicago, Indiana. In 1961, he began serving as a deputy prosecutor for Lake County, Indiana, until he was elected to Gary's City Council in 1963. He was the first and only freshman elected president of the City Council in Gary's history. When he was elected as mayor of Gary in 1967, Hatcher was the first African American mayor of a major U.S. city. He remained in office for an unprecedented five terms, until 1987, when he was defeated in a bid for a sixth term. During his twenty years as mayor, Hatcher was known for developing innovative approaches to urban problems and for being a national and international spokesman for civil rights, minorities, the poor and America's cities.

In 1988, Hatcher started his own consulting firm, R. Gordon Hatcher & Associates. From 1988 to 1989, he worked as an Institute of Politics fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School. He also began teaching political science at Roosevelt University in 1989 and then at Valparaiso University, where he is a senior research professor, in 1991. In the summer of 1996, Hatcher taught a law course at Cambridge University in England, and since 1989 he has worked as an adjunct professor at Indiana University. As a long time friend and advisor to the Reverend Jesse Jackson, Hatcher also played a leading role in Jackson's bids for the presidency as campaign chairman in 1984 and an adviser in 1988. Hatcher has authored numerous articles about urban affairs, civil rights, politics and law and has been working on a book. Hatcher has many affiliations and memberships with various civic, urban, political and civil rights organizations and has received a myriad of awards and honors for his lifetime of dedication to his community.

Hatcher passed away on December 13, 2019.

The Honorable Richard Hatcher was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on December 11, 2002.

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# Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Richard Hatcher was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on December 11, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 9 Betacame SP videocassettes. Law professor and mayor The Honorable Richard Hatcher (1933 - 2019) was the first African American mayor of Gary, Indiana and host of the National Black Political Assembly.

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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:

Hatcher, Richard G., 1933-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Hatcher, Richard G., 1933---Interviews

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African American mayors--Indiana--Gary--Interviews

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African American lawyers--Interviews

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African American law teachers--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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Indiana University

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Gary (Ind.)

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**Occupations:**

Law Professor

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Mayor

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**HistoryMakers® Category:**

LawMakers|PoliticalMakers

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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 Richard Hatcher, December 11, 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 The Honorable Richard Hatcher, Section A2002\_231\_001\_001, TRT: 0:31:16 ?

Richard Hatcher was born on July 10, 1933 to Carlton Hatcher and Catherine Hatcher in Michigan City, Indiana. Both of his parents were raised in Lizella, Georgia near Macon. His father left school when he was twelve and worked full-time as a sawmill foreman. After starting his family, he planned to leave his mill for another that offered more money, but his boss sent a sheriff to arrest him. To escape arrest, Hatcher dressed as a woman and boarded a train to Michigan City, hoping to raise the money there to move to Chicago, Illinois. In Michigan City, Carlton Hatcher worked for the Pullman Palace Car Company and raised his family in a poor area called “the Patch.” Richard Hatcher had twelve siblings, six of whom survived childhood. He attended Park Elementary School and Isaac C. Elston Junior High and High School. After briefly getting expelled from Indiana University, he received his B.A. degree from Indiana University in Bloomington in 1956 and his J.D. degree from Valparaiso University Law School in 1959.

African American mayors--Indiana--Gary--Interviews.

African American lawyers--Interviews.

African American law teachers--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Richard Hatcher, Section A2002\_231\_001\_002, TRT: 0:31:16 ?

Richard Hatcher was raised in Michigan City, Indiana. His parents gave birth to thirteen children, but only seven survived due to lack of proper medical care and unsafe housing. Hatcher’s mother, Catherine Hatcher, worked stuffing cushions at Blocksom & Co. and attended the Church of God in Christ while Hatcher’s father attended Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church. Though poor, they went out of their way to give Hatcher a piano. Catherine Hatcher died of cancer when Richard was thirteen. Two of Hatcher’s brothers served in the United States military during World War II and his mentor and brother-in-law, Emmett Wise, played for the Pittsburgh Crawfords in the Negro Semi-pro leagues. While in high school, Hatcher worked at Brownie’s Griddle as a dishwasher. He quit after the restaurant refused to serve a black couple and organized a sit-in of the restaurant after his first year in college. He also protested with the NAACP against Nick’s English Hut and the barbers in Bloomington, Indiana.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Richard Hatcher, Section A2002\_231\_001\_003, TRT: 0:31:07 ?

Richard Hatcher attended majority white schools in Michigan City, Indiana. When he enrolled at Isaac C. Elston Junior High School, he witnessed how white and black students unconsciously separated themselves after being good friends at Park Elementary School, a pattern Hatcher also witnessed as a professor. Hatcher’s childhood mentors included his father, who was highly

respected in his community and learned to read and write after he was eighty years old; his brother-in-law, Emmett Wise; and a neighborhood man named Charlie Westcott, who played basketball at the Elite Youth Center. In high school, Hatcher refused to attend prom because of a requirement that black students only take other black students. He also refused to take shop and instead took academic course. While attending Indiana University in Bloomington, Hatcher witnessed the integration of local barbershops and of the university Commons under Chancellor Herman B. Wells. Hatcher describes John Ward and other civil rights activists in Bloomington.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Richard Hatcher, Section A2002\_231\_001\_004, TRT: 0:31:18 ?

Richard Hatcher attended a majority white high school where his football coach took the team to eat at Eight Street Café in Michigan City, Indiana to ensure that the entire team was able to eat together. In 1956, Hatcher enrolled at Valparaiso University Law School in Valparaiso, Indiana, where he specialized in criminal law. There, he met his mentor Dr. Burton Wechsler, a white professor who was an attorney for the NAACP. After obtaining his J.D. degree in 1959, Hatcher was hired by Henry Walker, a prominent black lawyer in East Chicago, Indiana. In the early 1960s, Hatcher started the social welfare organization Muigwithania and served as deputy prosecutor in Lake County, Indiana. In 1963, he joined Jackie Shropshire's law office and successfully ran for councilman-at-large of Gary, Indiana. He was elected president of the city council in his first year and passed the Omnibus Open Occupancy Law, which permitted African Americans to live anywhere in the city, as well as the Omnibus Civil Rights Law.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Richard Hatcher, Section A2002\_231\_001\_005, TRT: 0:31:15 ?

Richard Hatcher describes his campaign for Mayor of the City of Gary, Indiana in 1967. In the primary, Hatcher ran against Bernard Konrady and the incumbent A. Martin Katz and won because they split the white vote evenly. Hatcher spent his budget campaigning for the primary with the expectation that the Democratic Party would finance his general election campaign, but the county party chairman, John Krupa, refused to do so. Instead, Krupa accused Hatcher of being un-American in the press and fabricated votes in favor of Republican candidate Joseph Radigan. Hatcher's campaign bounced back when they ran full-page ads asking for support in the New York Times, Chicago Tribune, and Gary Post-Tribune. These ads gained national attention and led to fundraisers with HistoryMaker Earl Graves, Robert Kennedy, HistoryMaker Ossie Davis, Hubert Humphrey, and Ted Kennedy, which together raised half a million dollars. Hatcher compares his campaign to those of Cleveland Mayor Carl Stokes and Chicago Mayor Harold Washington.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Richard Hatcher, Section A2002\_231\_001\_006, TRT: 0:31:15 ?

Richard Hatcher describes his election as the first African American mayor of Gary, Indiana in 1967. Two weeks before his election, it was revealed that County Clerk and County Democratic Chairman John Krupa was registering non-existent voters to support Republican candidate Joseph Radigan. With the aid of Jackie Shropshire, Bob Ming, Walter Black, and HistoryMaker Robert Wilkins, Hatcher took his case to a Federal District Court, who ruled unanimously in Hatcher's favor and ordered federal marshals to monitor the election. On November 7, 1967, Hatcher was elected mayor by eight-tenths of a vote. On the same day, Carl Stokes was elected mayor of Cleveland, Ohio; HistoryMaker Mervyn Dymally was elected lieutenant governor of California;

and HistoryMaker George Brown was elected lieutenant governor of Colorado. Hatcher remembers the support he received from across the county. He also describes his unsuccessful campaign for Justice of the Peace in 1958 and the white flight that followed his election in Gary.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Richard Hatcher, Section A2002\_231\_001\_007, TRT: 0:31:15 ?

Richard Hatcher reflects on the unlikelihood that the African American community in Gary, Indiana or Chicago, Illinois will support a black candidate for mayor with the same fervor as they supported him and Harold Washington, and on their resistance to raise racial issues. Hatcher shares his opinions on black politicians who compromise, like HistoryMakers Andrew Young and John Lewis, and those he views as more assertive politicians including Maynard Jackson, Sheila Jackson Lee, and HistoryMakers Al Sharpton, Maxine Waters, Ron Dellums, and Reverend Jesse Jackson. In 1984, Hatcher served as campaign chairman for Reverend Jackson's presidential campaign and remembers his willingness to step up when others would not. After losing the 1987 election, Hatcher started the consulting firm of R. Gordon Hatcher & Associates, and was an advisor to Reverend Jackson's 1988 presidential campaign. He reflects upon the need for black leaders to unify in support of common goals and to elect the first black U.S. President.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Richard Hatcher, Section A2002\_231\_001\_008, TRT: 0:31:13 ?

Richard Hatcher reflects upon his legacy and the legacy of his generation of African American mayors. He describes the contributions of mayors including Maynard Jackson, Carl Stokes, HistoryMaker David Dinkins, Dutch Morial, HistoryMaker Marc Morial, HistoryMaker Ron Kirk, Kenneth Gibson, Coleman Young, and Michael White. Hatcher shares his opinions about contemporary politicians he would vote for if they ran for President of the United States, including HistoryMaker Reverend Jesse Jackson, HistoryMaker Colin Powell, and HistoryMaker Maxine Waters. He also reflects upon his own ambitions to hold a statewide or nationwide elected office and how the career advancement paths that are available to white mayors are not open to African Americans. Hatcher describes the increase in police brutality and racial profiling since September 11, 2001 that has affected the African American community. Hatcher ends the interview by sharing his goal to build a national Civil Rights Hall of Fame.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Richard Hatcher, Section A2002\_231\_001\_009, TRT: 0:12:30 ?

Richard Hatcher narrates his photographs.