

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend James Bevel

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Bevel, James L. (James Luther), 1936-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend James Bevel,
Dates:	January 14, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:28:15).
Abstract:	Civil rights activist Reverend James Bevel (1936 - 2008) was the daring hero of 1963's Children's Crusade in Birmingham, Alabama. In addition to his activities during the Civil Rights Movement, Bevel were also an active force in interfaith dialogues, and several human and civil rights campaigns in the United States. Bevel was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 14, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_004
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civil rights activist Reverend James Luther Bevel was born in Itta Bena, Mississippi, on October 19, 1936. After a stint in the services, Bevel was called to the ministry and enrolled in the American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville, Tennessee. While in the Seminary, Bevel joined the Nashville chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), then led by the Reverend James Lawson.

In 1960, Bevel and other black students trained by Lawson, including John Lewis, Dianne Nash, Marion Barry, and Bernard Lafayette, organized sit-ins against segregated lunch counters. Eventually Bevel and his colleagues won a hard-fought, nonviolent victory; soon after, as chairman of the Nashville student movement, Bevel participated in Freedom Rides to desegregate interstate travel and public accommodations throughout the South. In his home state, Bevel created the SCLC Mississippi Project for voting rights in 1962. In 1963, Bevel was compelled to join the desegregation struggle being waged by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth in Birmingham, Alabama. When King was jailed, Bevel organized black children and marched against Commissioner Bull Connor's fire hoses and police dogs. The "Children's Crusade," as the movement led by Bevel came to be known, turned the media tide in the favor of the desegregationists. Bevel helped in the brainstorming for the March on Washington in 1963, and the Selma to Montgomery marches in 1965. Bevel also worked behind the scenes on the Chicago open housing movement in 1966; the anti-Vietnam War movement in 1967; the Memphis sanitation workers strike; and the Poor People's Campaign in 1968.

In 1969, Bevel left SCLC and created the Making of a Man Clinic in 1970. In the 1980s and 1990s, Bevel founded Students for Education and Economic Development (SEED). In 1992, Bevel ran for vice president on a ticket with Lyndon LaRouche.

Bevel served as pastor of the Hebraic-Christian-Islamic Assembly in Chicago; a board member of Chicago's

Fulfilling Our Responsibilities Unto Mankind (F.O.R.U.M.); and chairman of the Camden, New Jersey, County Economic Development Board. Bevel also served as pastor and adviser to Chicago's Council of Mothers; the West Side Baptist Minister's Conference; WorkShip Coalition; and the Nation of Islam.

Bevel passed away on December 19, 2008 at age 72.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reverend James Bevel was conducted by Larry Crowe on January 14, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civil rights activist Reverend James Bevel (1936 - 2008) was the daring hero of 1963's Children's Crusade in Birmingham, Alabama. In addition to his activities during the Civil Rights Movement, Bevel were also an active force in interfaith dialogues, and several human and civil rights campaigns in the United States.

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:

Bevel, James L. (James Luther), 1936-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Bevel, James L. (James Luther), 1936- --Interviews

African American civic leaders--Interviews

African American civil rights workers--Interviews

Community activists--Interviews

African American clergy--Interviews

African American religious leaders--Interviews

African American Baptists--Interviews

African Americans--Genealogy

African American families--Mississippi

Cleveland (Ohio)

African American children

Childhood

Religious thought--United States

United States. Navy

Segregation in education--United States

Nashville (Tenn.)

Civil rights movements--United States

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (U.S.)

Freedom Rides, 1961

Council of Federated Organizations (U.S.)

Evers, Medgar Wiley, 1925-1963

Assassination

Civil rights demonstrations--Alabama

Poor People's Campaign

Anti-war demonstrations

Selma to Montgomery Rights March (1965 : Selma, Ala.)

March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, Washington, D.C., 1963

African American political activists--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Civil Rights 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 James Bevel, January 14, 2003. 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 James Bevel, Section A2003_004_001_001, TRT: 0:29:35 ?

Minister and activist James Bevel discusses his family's ethnic origins, sharing his family's unique philosophy regarding ancestry and genealogy. Bevel then describes his parents, crediting both for influencing his religion, education, and philosophy. Bevel also describes his hometown of Itta Bena, Mississippi, a segregated rural town.

African American civic leaders--Interviews.

African American civil rights workers--Interviews.

Community activists--Interviews.

African American clergy--Interviews.

African American religious leaders--Interviews.

African American Baptists--Interviews.

African Americans--Genealogy.

African American families--Mississippi.

Cleveland (Ohio).

African American children.

Religious thought--United States.

United States. Navy.

Segregation in education--United States.

Nashville (Tenn.).

Civil rights movements--United States.

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (U.S.).

Freedom Rides, 1961.

Council of Federated Organizations (U.S.).

Evers, Medgar Wiley, 1925-1963.

Assassination.

Civil rights demonstrations--Alabama.

Poor People's Campaign.

Anti-war demonstrations.

Selma to Montgomery Rights March (1965 : Selma, Ala.).

March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, Washington, D.C., 1963.

African American political activists--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend James Bevel, Section A2003_004_001_002, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

James Bevel continues to describe his childhood environment in Itta Bena,

Mississippi. Topics include his schooling, his recreations, and the social climate of the town. Bevel then explains how he moved to Cleveland, Ohio, with his mother, and describes his education there. Bevel then discusses his decision to enlist in the Navy, explains how his changing philosophy caused him to leave early.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend James Bevel, Section A2003_004_001_003, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

James Bevel briefly discusses his activities before joining the ministry, including why he left the U.S. Navy and his musical career. Bevel then explains why he chose to enroll at the American Baptist Theological Seminary, and describes the lessons he learned there. Bevel describes the organization and strategies of the student-led movement for civil rights in Nashville, which came into being while he was attending seminary.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend James Bevel, Section A2003_004_001_004, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

James Bevel details his involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. Bevel begins his discussion in Nashville, where he helped to desegregate department stores and movie theaters, and was a founding member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Bevel then speaks of his participation in the Freedom Rides in Alabama and Mississippi, and explains the philosophy behind his and SNCC's actions.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend James Bevel, Section A2003_004_001_005, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

James Bevel details his involvement in the Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s. Bevel discusses further his participation in SNCC, and explains why he supported the creation of the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), the goal of which was to promote voting rights in the South. Bevel also talks about the assassination of Medgar Evers, and the challenges he and SNCC faced when bringing their battle into a national political arena.