

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ernest Green

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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>	Green, Ernest
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ernest Green,
<b>Dates:</b>	January 22, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:34:20).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Investment executive and civil rights leader Ernest Green (1941 - ) was one of the "Little Rock Nine," the first group of black students to integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. Green was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 22, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_013
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Ernest G. Green was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, on September 22, 1941 to Lothaire S. and Ernest G. Green, Sr. His parents instilled in him confidence and self-respect that helped him to become a leader among his peers and a civil rights advocate. He was one of the first black students to integrate at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, following the Supreme Court ruling to desegregate in 1954. Green is the oldest of the "Little Rock Nine," a group of high school students who entered Central High School on the morning of September 25, 1957, with an escort of paratroopers. Governor Orval Faubus had summoned National Guardsmen to turn away the black pupils in direct defiance of the federal government, which had already approved a desegregation plan for the school. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, for the first time since Reconstruction, sent in federal troops to protect the rights of the beleaguered students, and the students ultimately prevailed. Green graduated from Michigan State University with a B.A. in 1962 and an M.A. in 1964.

In 1965, Green became involved in employment law with a building-trade apprenticeship for the Adolph Institute, a project to help minority women in the South find opportunities for professional careers. He then directed the A. Phillip Randolph Education Fund from 1968 to 1976. Between 1977 and 1981, he served as assistant secretary in the Labor Department under President Jimmy Carter. Since 1981, Green has worked in the private sector for consulting firms. He was a partner for Green and Herman from 1981 to 1985, owned E. Green and Associates from 1985 to 1986, and has been with Lehman Brothers since 1985.

Green has been on the boards of various organizations, such as the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, AfriCare and the African Development Foundation. He has received numerous awards and honors for his work, including the NAACP Spingarn Award, the Rockefeller Public Service Award, and honorary doctorates from Tougaloo College, Michigan State University, and Central State University.

He is married to Phyllis Green and they have three children, Adam, Jessica and McKenzie.

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Ernest Green was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on January 22, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Investment executive and civil rights leader Ernest Green (1941 - ) was one of the "Little Rock Nine," the first group of black students to integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.

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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:

Green, Ernest

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Green, Ernest--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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### Occupations:

Civil Rights Leader

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### HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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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 Ernest Green, January 22, 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).

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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 Ernest Green, Section A2003\_013\_001\_001, TRT: 0:31:10 ?

Ernest Green describes his family background. His father, Ernest Green, Sr., was born in Monroe, Louisiana in the early 1900s. After serving in World War I, he moved to Little Rock, Arkansas, where he met and married Lothaire Scott. Scott was born in 1899 in Little Rock, Arkansas to Eugene and Bertha Scott. She attended Wilberforce College in the early 1920s, returning to Little Rock to teach. The Greens gave birth to three children, including Ernest Green, Jr. on

September 22, 1941. Green, Sr., worked as a janitor and a waiter, and Lothaire Scott Green as a public school teacher. She was also a member of the NAACP, and underwrote a lawsuit against the Little Rock School District with her sister Treopia Gravely. In his middle class neighborhood, Green, Jr. enjoyed playing with his dog, Spot. His father emphasized academic excellence, and his mother home-schooled him as a child. Green also comments on the Arkansas media's reaction to the Brown v. Board of Education decision, and how he perceived the decision.

Video Oral History Interview with Ernest Green, Section A2003\_013\_001\_002, TRT: 0:31:30 ?

Ernest Green grew up in a close-knit middle class community in Little Rock, Arkansas, where he was nicknamed "Brother". As a youth, Green had a paper route, was the assistant to a brick mason, enjoyed jazz music, and played the saxophone. During Green's first visit to the North, he saw that overt discrimination did not exist everywhere. Green was influenced by the integration of the University of Arkansas Schools of Medicine and Law, the murder of Emmett Till and the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The activism of his mother, Lothaire Green, and his grandfather, Eugene Scott, during the 1940s motivated Green further to make a change in his community. Thus, in 1956, Green volunteered as one of the students to integrate Central High School. Green was officially selected to integrate the school in the summer of 1957, and met with the Little Rock School Board to prepare for the transfer. Though Green's family was supportive of his decision, some of his neighbors and white peers accused him of overstepping his boundaries.

Video Oral History Interview with Ernest Green, Section A2003\_013\_001\_003, TRT: 0:31:30 ?

In the summer of 1957, Ernest Green was selected to integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. In total, nine students were selected based on merit. Over the course of the summer, the student cohort met with Daisy Bates, head of the Little Rock NAACP, to prepare. Though much of Little Rock's black community did not express support for the students, Green's friends did. In September of 1957, Green and his cohort were escorted to Central High School, but were turned away by an angry mob and Arkansas National Guardsmen, who were deployed by Governor Orval Faubus. Green did not realize the severity of the students' actions until watching television later that evening. Three weeks after his first attempt, Green entered Central High School. He only stayed for half of his first day due to mob hostility. Over time, the hostility Green faced from teachers and students caused his grades to suffer. During his second semester, harassment against Green, and the white students who treated him well, increased.

Video Oral History Interview with Ernest Green, Section A2003\_013\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Ernest Green graduated from Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas in the spring of 1958; Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. attended the graduation ceremony. Green worked in New York City during the summer of 1958, and saw HistoryMaker Thelonious Monk, as well as Miles Davis and John Coltrane, perform. He also spent time with Lorraine Hansberry, and saw 'Raisin in the Sun'. Green received a scholarship to attend Michigan State University, and enrolled in the school in 1958. Green received a lot of attention during his first month at the school, and spoke at a few NAACP functions; yet, his mother encouraged him to focus on his studies. Green majored in sociology, and was mentored by David Gottlieb. After graduating with his B.A. degree in 1962, Green received a fellowship to pursue an M.A. degree in sociology at Michigan State University. An internship with Look Magazine led Green to meet A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin, and he was hired by the men to work for the

Workers Defense League in 1964.

Video Oral History Interview with Ernest Green, Section A2003\_013\_001\_005, TRT: 0:31:25 ?

In 1968, Ernest Green became director of the A. Philip Randolph Education Fund, and HistoryMaker Alexis Herman worked under him briefly. Green worked closely with Bayard Rustin, from whom he learned to read people and set long term goals. Green also talked about Rustin's role in the March on Washington. In 1977, Green was appointed as the Assistant U.S. Secretary of Labor. Here, he pushed for increased job training programs using funds from the Comprehensive Employment Training Act. In 1981, Green founded Green and Herman consulting firm with Alexis Herman. He started his own consulting firm in 1985, but ended it in 1986 in order to work as an investment banker for Shearson Lehman Brothers. In 1987, Green met Governor of Arkansas William "Bill" Clinton. Green helped Clinton build important African American contacts, including HistoryMaker Johnson H. Johnson. This relationship enabled Clinton to utilize 'Jet' Magazine as a strategic media platform, helping him to win the Illinois Democratic primary in 1992.

Video Oral History Interview with Ernest Green, Section A2003\_013\_001\_006, TRT: 0:30:15 ?

In the 1980s, Ernest Green built a relationship with HistoryMaker Reverend Jesse Jackson. He later worked with HistoryMaker Alexis Herman on Jackson's campaign for the 1984 Presidential Election. Though he did not expect Jackson to win the election, Green expected Jackson to be a media favorite, and a serious contender for the Democratic nomination after the 1983 Michigan Democratic Primary. In the 1990s, Green helped President William "Bill" Clinton build his African American network during his campaign for the 1993 Presidential Election. In 1993, Disney premiered a television movie about Green's life entitled "The Ernest Green Story." Green comments on the positivity of this movie, and the importance of sharing the story of the Little Rock Nine. Despite the significance of his integrating Central High School, Green built a successful life outside of his Little Rock experience by building a family and a successful career. Green also commented on the state of the black community, and his plans for the future

Video Oral History Interview with Ernest Green, Section A2003\_013\_001\_007, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Ernest Green commented on the benefits of being a member of the Little Rock Nine. Though the experience was traumatic for each of the individuals involved, Green noted that the Nine brought about an important moment in history, and that the significance of their actions should be acknowledged and shared. According to Green, integration and school bussing was positive, as it enabled African Americans to access higher quality education. Green talks about how he would like to be remembered, and closes the interview by narrating his photographs.