

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Andrew F. Brimmer

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Brimmer, Andrew F.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Andrew F. Brimmer,
Dates:	April 24, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	9 Betacame SP videocassettes (4:08:45).
Abstract:	Economist Andrew F. Brimmer (1926 - 2012) became the first African American vice president of the Federal Reserve. He was president of the North American Economics and Finance Association and serves on a number of other corporate boards. Brimmer was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 24, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_090
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Economist, academic and business leader Andrew F. Brimmer was born in Newellton, Louisiana, on September 13, 1926. The son of sharecroppers who had been driven off of the land by boll weevils, Brimmer attended local racially segregated elementary and high schools. Upon graduation, Brimmer moved to Bremerton, Washington, with an older sister and worked in a navy yard as an electrician's helper. In 1945, Brimmer was drafted into the Army, where he served until November 1946. After completing his military service, Brimmer enrolled in the University of Washington, where he earned his B.A. degree in economics in 1950. In 1951, after receiving his M.A. degree, Brimmer won a Fulbright grant to study in India. In 1952, Brimmer enrolled in Harvard, where he earned his Ph.D. in 1957.

While working on his doctorate, Brimmer went to work for the Federal Reserve Bank of New York as an economist. While working with the Federal Reserve Bank, Brimmer traveled to Khartoum, Sudan, to help the country establish a central bank. During the John F. Kennedy administration, Brimmer became assistant secretary of economic affairs in the U.S. Department of Commerce, and served until 1966. That same year Brimmer began an eight-and-a-half year term on the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System; while filling this role, he became the first African American governor of the Federal Reserve. In 1974, Brimmer left to take a post at Harvard University, where he stayed for two years. Upon leaving Harvard, Brimmer formed his own consulting company, Brimmer & Co.

Brimmer was elected to the Washington Academy of Sciences in 1991, largely as a result of his published works on the nature and importance of central banking systems. Brimmer served as vice president of the American Economic Association and president of the Eastern Economics Association; he also served as the president of the North American Economics and Finance Association, in addition to serving on a number of other corporate boards of directors.

Brimmer passed away on October 7, 2012 at age 86.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Andrew F. Brimmer was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 24, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 9 Betacame SP videocassettes. Economist Andrew F. Brimmer (1926 - 2012) became the first African American vice president of the Federal Reserve. He was president of the North American Economics and Finance Association and serves on a number of other corporate boards.

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:

Brimmer, Andrew F.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Brimmer, Andrew F. --Interviews

African American businesspeople--Interviews

Financial executives--Interviews

Economists--Interviews

Boll-weevil

Floods--Mississippi River Valley

African American families

African Americans--Genealogy

Tensas Parish (La.)

United States--Race relations

Race relations in the United States

Discrimination in education

Rural-urban migration

Puget Sound Naval Shipyard

University of Washington

Fulbright scholars

Doctoral students

Sudan

Federal Reserve Bank of New York

United States. Civil Rights Act of 1964

Discrimination

Harvard Business School

United States. Congress. D.C. Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority

Marshall, Thurgood, 1908-1993

African American young men

African American youth

Galbraith, John Kenneth, 1908-2006

Slaves--United States

African Americans--Religion

University of Bombay

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Economist

HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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 Andrew F. Brimmer, April 24, 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 Andrew F. Brimmer, Section A2003_090_001_001, TRT: 0:30:05 ?

Economist Andrew Brimmer recalls his childhood community of Newellton, in Tensas Parish, northeast Louisiana, where he was born in 1926. He shares oral history passed down from relatives and a neighbor who was a former slave, born in the 1830s. Brimmer talks about his father, a farm laborer who tried to make it as a tenant farmer, but was defeated by the boll weevil and the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927, and later worked as a "straw boss" at a grain elevator. Although he had only gone to school through the second grade, Brimmer's father later used his children's textbooks to educate himself further.

African American businesspeople--Interviews.

Financial executives--Interviews.

Economists--Interviews.

Boll-weevil.

Floods--Mississippi River Valley.

African American families.

African Americans--Genealogy.

Tensas Parish (La.).

United States--Race relations.

Discrimination in education.

Rural-urban migration.

Puget Sound Naval Shipyard.

University of Washington.

Fulbright scholars.

Doctoral students.

Sudan.

Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

United States. Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Discrimination.

Harvard Business School.

United States. Congress. D.C. Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority.

Marshall, Thurgood, 1908-1993.

African American young men.

African American youth--Crimes against--Georgia--Atlanta.

Galbraith, John Kenneth, 1908-2006.

Slaves--United States.

African Americans--Religion.

University of Bombay.

Video Oral History Interview with Andrew F. Brimmer, Section A2003_090_001_002, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Economist Andrew Brimmer recalls growing up in the small town of Newellton in Tensas Parish, northeastern Louisiana. He remembers church and school experiences and also comments on the "rowdy types" partying in town on Saturday nights and on cases of "race-mixing" that were well known locally.

Video Oral History Interview with Andrew F. Brimmer, Section A2003_090_001_003, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Economist Andrew Brimmer remembers his experiences at Tensas Parish Training School, a small secondary school for blacks in a rural area of northeast Louisiana. He recalls relatives who had left the area in the Great Migration, heading to northern cities or to Nevada to work on the Boulder Dam. Brimmer's brother-in-law moved to Washington state in 1942 to work at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and helped Brimmer to get work there after high school in 1944. The following year he was drafted, and Brimmer describes his military training and his service with the ammunition corps in Hawaii just after World War Two had ended.

Video Oral History Interview with Andrew F. Brimmer, Section A2003_090_001_004, TRT: 0:29:05 ?

Economist Andrew Brimmer recalls studying economics at University of Washington; meeting Robert C. Weaver; serving in an internship with the Economic Cooperation Administration in 1950; and studying at the Delhi School of Economics and the University of Bombay as a Fulbright scholar in India in 1951-1952.

Video Oral History Interview with Andrew F. Brimmer, Section A2003_090_001_005, TRT: 0:29:55 ?

Economist Andrew Brimmer talks about his time as a doctoral candidate and teaching fellow at Harvard University where he studied with economists such as John Kenneth Galbraith, Wassily Leontief, Alvin Hansen and John Williams. While still finishing his dissertation he began working at the Federal Reserve in New York, and in 1956 he was one of a trio of economists who spent several months in newly-independent Sudan, helping them to set up a banking system.

Video Oral History Interview with Andrew F. Brimmer, Section A2003_090_001_006, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Economist Andrew Brimmer recalls a mission to the newly independent Republic of Sudan in 1956 to help set up a central bank. He talks about having received several offers for federal positions while he was teaching at universities in the early 1960s, and eventually accepting a position as Assistant Secretary of Economic Affairs in 1963. Brimmer details one of his first assignments, gathering evidence in support of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and testifying before Congress about how discrimination in public accommodations affected interstate commerce.

Video Oral History Interview with Andrew F. Brimmer, Section A2003_090_001_007, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Economist Andrew Brimmer talks about his work for in the Department of Commerce in the Johnson administration. He discusses President Lyndon B. Johnson's commitment to appointing African Americans to high ranking positions, and analyzes the politics involved in the appointments of Robert

Weaver and Thurgood Marshall as well as his own appointment as the first black governor on the Federal Reserve Board where he served for eight years before accepting a position at Harvard Business School and then forming his own consulting company. Finally, Dr. Brimmer talks about Congress' creation of the District of Columbia Financial Control Board and his appointment as chair.

Video Oral History Interview with Andrew F. Brimmer, Section A2003_090_001_008, TRT: 0:27:20 ?

Economist Andrew Brimmer talks about his work on the federally appointed Control Board for the District of Columbia and the activities of his nearly thirty-year-old consulting company. He shares his concerns about the problems faced by those in the black community being "left behind," especially young black males, and he calls for an investment in human capital along the lines of the GI Bill. Finally, Dr. Brimmer assesses his greatest accomplishments and considers what his legacy may be.

Video Oral History Interview with Andrew F. Brimmer, Section A2003_090_001_009, TRT: 0:13:50 ?

Andrew Brimmer narrates his photographs.