

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Arthur Fletcher

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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>	Fletcher, Arthur, 1924-2005
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Arthur Fletcher,
<b>Dates:</b>	May 29, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:34:48).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Federal government appointee and foundation chief executive Arthur Fletcher (1924 - 2005 ) was appointed by President Gerald Ford as deputy of urban affairs where he became known as the father of affirmative action. In 1972, Fletcher joined the United Negro College Fund as executive director and coined its slogan, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste." Fletcher was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 29, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_111
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civil rights activist and affirmative action champion Arthur A. Fletcher was born in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1924. As a child, Fletcher's parents moved frequently. Fletcher graduated from high school in Junction City, Kansas; from there he attended Washburn University, earning degrees in political science and sociology. Fletcher later went on to earn his law degree and his Ph.D. in education.

Fletcher organized his first civil rights protest while still in high school after being told that African American student photographs would be included in the back of the yearbook. After graduating from high school, Fletcher served in World War II under General George Patton and earned a Purple Heart. Fletcher joined the Los Angeles Rams in 1950 and later became the first African American to play for the Baltimore Colts.

Fletcher entered politics in 1954, when he worked on Fred Hall's gubernatorial campaign, and took a position working for the Kansas Highway Commission; he took the knowledge of government contracts he gained there to encourage African American businesses to bid on contracts. After moving to Washington, Fletcher worked a number of government jobs, eventually becoming the special assistant to the governor in 1969. That same year, President Richard Nixon appointed Fletcher to the office of assistant secretary of wage and labor standards in the Department of Labor. While serving in this capacity, Fletcher devised the Philadelphia Plan, which enforced equal employment and business opportunities for minorities. In 1972, Fletcher joined the United Negro College Fund as executive director, and coined its slogan, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste." Fletcher later returned to government service when President Gerald Ford appointed him to the office of deputy of urban affairs. In this role, Fletcher came to be known as the father of the affirmative action enforcement movement.

Fletcher was appointed to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in 1990, where he served until 1993 as chairman

and a commissioner. In 1996, prompted by Senator Bob Dole's reversal of his forty-year affirmative action policy, Fletcher made a run for the presidency; he later became president and CEO of Fletcher's Learning Systems and publisher of USA Tomorrow/The Fletcher Letter.

Fletcher spent a great deal of time touring the country for speaking engagements on equal opportunity rights and the benefits of affirmative action, and served as the chairman of the National Black Chamber of Commerce. Fletcher wrote several articles that appeared in magazines such as Ebony and Fortune, in addition to authoring a book entitled My Hour of Power.

Arthur A. Fletcher passed away on July 12, 2005; he was survived by his wife, Bernyce Fletcher.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Arthur Fletcher was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on May 29, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Federal government appointee and foundation chief executive Arthur Fletcher (1924 - 2005 ) was appointed by President Gerald Ford as deputy of urban affairs where he became known as the father of affirmative action. In 1972, Fletcher joined the United Negro College Fund as executive director and coined its slogan, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste."

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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:

Fletcher, Arthur, 1924-2005

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Fletcher, Arthur, 1924-2005 --Interviews

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African American civil rights workers--Interviews

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African American political activists--Interviews

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African American politicians--Interviews

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Affirmative action programs

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Minorities--Employment

---

Military dependents

---

African American families

---

Veterans--Services for--United States

---

Education--Kansas

---

High school athletes

---

Discrimination in education

---

World War, 1939-1945--Personal narratives, American

---

Football players

---

World War, 1939-1945--Campaigns--France--Normandy

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Washburn University of Topeka

---

Kansas--Politics and government

---

Educational change

---

Urban renewal--United States

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United States. Dept. of Labor

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United States. Community Reinvestment Act of 1977

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United Negro College Fund

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Republican Party (U.S. : 1854-)

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African Americans--Politics and government

---

Professional athletes

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National Football League

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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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United Negro College Fund

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## **Occupations:**

Federal Government Appointee

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Foundation Chief Executive

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

CivicMakers|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 Arthur Fletcher, May 29, 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 Arthur Fletcher, Section A2003\_111\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:24 ?

Affirmative action pioneer Arthur Fletcher shares his family background and recalls his childhood. Fletcher discusses the impact of growing up in a military family and describes the environments at the many bases on which he lived as a child. He describes the personalities of his mother and father, and explains how they shaped his own personality, particularly in regards to education. Fletcher also discusses the impact of the G.I. Bill of Rights on his family and African Americans.

African American civil rights workers--Interviews.

African American political activists--Interviews.

African American politicians--Interviews.

Affirmative action programs.

Minorities--Employment.

Military dependents.

African American families.

Veterans--Services for--United States.

Education--Kansas.

High school athletes.

Discrimination in education.

World War, 1939-1945--Personal narratives, American.

Football players.

World War, 1939-1945--Campaigns--France--Normandy.

Washburn University of Topeka.

Kansas--Politics and government.

Educational change.

Urban renewal--United States.

United States. Dept. of Labor.

United States. Community Reinvestment Act of 1977.

United Negro College Fund.

Republican Party (U.S. : 1854-).

African Americans--Politics and government.

Professional athletes.

National Football League.

- Video Oral History Interview with Arthur Fletcher, Section A2003\_111\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:34 ?  
Arthur Fletcher discusses his schooling and explains how it impacted his life. Fletcher particularly focuses on the education he received in Kansas, where he simultaneously encountered teachers that encouraged him and discouraged him. He explains that his dealings with discouraging teachers inspired him in his later struggles for affirmative action. Fletcher also discusses the important role sports played in his life while attending high school in Kansas.
- Video Oral History Interview with Arthur Fletcher, Section A2003\_111\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:32 ?  
Arthur Fletcher discusses his military career and involvement in World War II. Fletcher starts with a story about how he became a football star at Fort Knox, Kentucky, and then explains his duties as a combat MP during the Invasion of Normandy and other battles in France. Fletcher explains why he decided to attend Washburn University, calling it the best decision of his life.
- Video Oral History Interview with Arthur Fletcher, Section A2003\_111\_001\_004, TRT: 0:31:13 ?  
Arthur Fletcher discusses how he became involved with the Republican Party in Kansas and explains his efforts to bring civil rights legislation to the state. Fletcher then describes the trials and tribulations of his pro football career, and explains how he became involved in politics upon his retirement and his return to Kansas.
- Video Oral History Interview with Arthur Fletcher, Section A2003\_111\_001\_005, TRT: 0:31:14 ?  
Arthur Fletcher discusses his involvement in Kansas state politics, including his role during Fred Hall's gubernatorial campaign and his appointment to the Kansas Highway Commission. Fletcher also shares his opinions about the functionality of Kansas politics. Fletcher discusses a difficult time in his personal life and explains how he shifted his focus to educational reform.
- Video Oral History Interview with Arthur Fletcher, Section A2003\_111\_001\_006, TRT: 0:30:48 ?  
Arthur Fletcher details his involvement with the Washington Manpower Development Project for urban renewal, and his campaign for Lieutenant Governor of Washington. Fletcher then discusses his appointment to the Department of Labor and his role as the "father of affirmative action", as he created the Philadelphia Plan for enforcing the Civil Rights Act. Fletcher also shares his thoughts about the Community Reinvestment Act.
- Video Oral History Interview with Arthur Fletcher, Section A2003\_111\_001\_007, TRT: 0:30:03 ?  
Arthur Fletcher continues to discuss the Community Reinvestment Act, and then details his experience as the leader of the United Negro College Fund. Fletcher talks about conflicts within the Republican Party and his efforts to continue enforcing affirmative action. Fletcher reflects on his career, considering what it means to be a black Republican, offering his concerns for the future of African Americans, and considering his legacy.