

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Dr. Joseph Lowery

---

## 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>	Lowery, Joseph E.
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Joseph Lowery,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 13, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:36:50).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Civil rights leader, minister, and nonprofit chief executive Reverend Dr. Joseph Lowery (1921 - 2020) was co-founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and led the Selma to Montgomery March in 1965. Lowery was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 13, 2003, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_185
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Outspoken civil rights activist the Reverend Joseph Lowery was born on October 6, 1921, in Huntsville, Alabama. Considered the dean of the Civil Rights Movement, Lowery began his education in Huntsville, spending his middle school years in Chicago before returning to Huntsville to complete high school. From there, Lowery attended Knoxville College, Payne College and Theological Seminary, and the Chicago Ecumenical Institute. Lowery earned his doctorate of divinity as well.

Lowery began his work with civil rights in the early 1950s in Mobile, Alabama, where he headed the Alabama Civic Affairs Association, an organization devoted to the desegregation of buses and public places. During this time, the state of Alabama sued Lowery, along with several other prominent ministers, on charges of libel, seizing his property. The Supreme Court sided with the ministers, and Lowery's seized property was returned. In 1957, Lowery and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and Lowery was named vice president. H Lowery led the famous 1965 Selma to Montgomery March - the Bloody Sunday march - at the time that George Wallace was governor of Alabama.

Lowery was co-founder and former president of the Black Leadership Forum, a consortium of black advocacy groups. The Forum began protesting apartheid in South Africa in the mid-1970s, and continued their activities in that region until the election of Nelson Mandela. In 1979, during a rash of disappearances of Atlanta's African American youth, Lowery provided a calm voice to a frightened community. In 1990, Lowery was invited by the FBI to meet with director William Sessions to conduct a seminar on African Americans and the image of the FBI.

After serving his community for more than forty-five years, Lowery retired from the pulpit in 1997. Lowery also retired in 1998 from the SCLC as president and CEO. Despite his retirement, Lowery still remained active; he worked to encourage African Americans to vote, and even recorded a rap with artist NATE the Great to help spread this message.

Lowery received numerous awards, including an NAACP Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Martin Luther King Center Peace Award. *Essence* twice named Lowery as one of the Fifteen Greatest Black Preachers. Lowery's wife, Evelyn Gibson Lowery, was also an activist in her own right.

Lowery passed away on March 27, 2020.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reverend Dr. Joseph Lowery was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 13, 2003, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civil rights leader, minister, and nonprofit chief executive Reverend Dr. Joseph Lowery (1921 - 2020) was co-founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and led the Selma to Montgomery March in 1965.

---

## 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:

Lowery, Joseph E.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Lowery, Joseph E.--Interviews

---

## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

## Occupations:

Civil Rights Leader

---

Minister

---

## HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers|ReligionMakers

---

## 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 Dr. Joseph Lowery, August 13, 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 Dr. Joseph Lowery, Section A2003\_185\_001\_001,  
TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Pastor and civil rights leader Joseph E. Lowery details his family background and shares several anecdotes of his father's irrepressible personality. Lowery recalls how his father often outfoxed racist whites in his hometown of Huntsville, Alabama.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Joseph Lowery, Section A2003\_185\_001\_002,  
TRT: 0:29:42 ?

Civil rights activist Joseph E. Lowery details his life in Huntsville, Alabama and later Chicago. His parents wanting to provide a better education for young Joseph, sent him to Chicago when he was in the 6th grade. Lowery recalls life on the South Side, with Joe Louis as one of his neighbors. Persuaded to attend Knoxville College, Lowery had his first inklings of entering the ministry.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Joseph Lowery, Section A2003\_185\_001\_003,  
TRT: 0:28:53 ?

Civil rights leader Joseph E. Lowery shares several stories from the crucial early period of the Civil Rights Movement. He describes the seminal lawsuit, New York Times vs. Sullivan, which was fought all the way to the Supreme Court. Lowery also describes how he by chance escaped the bombing of the A.G. Gaston Motel. He also recalls with great fondness his friendship with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr..

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Joseph Lowery, Section A2003\_185\_001\_004,  
TRT: 0:28:56 ?

Civil rights leader and founder of the SCLC, Joseph E. Lowery recalls his role in the Civil Rights Movement, detailing the 'Bloody Sunday' march from Selma, Alabama to Montgomery, Alabama in 1965, discussing voters rights, and describing his relationship with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Joseph Lowery, Section A2003\_185\_001\_005,  
TRT: 0:28:50 ?

Civil rights leader and SCLC founder Joseph E. Lowery details several memorable events during the 1970s-1990s. He describes a Ku Klux Klan shooting where he narrowly escaped being shot himself, a battle and later rapprochement with George Wallace, fighting apartheid and teaching FBI agents how to deal with the Klan.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Joseph Lowery, Section A2003\_185\_001\_006,  
TRT: 0:10:59 ?

Civil rights leader and activist, Rev. Joseph E. Lowery reflects on the lives and legacies of Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. He also posits on the nature of equity vs. equality. Lowery, in closing, contemplates his legacy as "a preacher who preached truth to power in terms of equity and justice and love and human dignity, a small-town preacher who the big city tolerated."