

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Paul Jones

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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>	Jones, Paul R. (Paul Raymond), 1928-2010
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Paul Jones,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 16, 2003, August 23, 2005 and June 24, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003 and 2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	11 Betacame SP videocassettes (5:16:10).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Civic leader Paul Jones (1928 - 2010 ) has held numerous political appointments and real estate holdings, and is an avid collector of African American art. Jones was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 16, 2003, August 23, 2005 and June 24, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_195
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Paul R. Jones was born Paul Raymond Jones on June 1, 1928, in Bessemer, Alabama, a company-run mining town, as the youngest of five children. Jones started off school in the South, but was sent by his family to New York to continue his education. By the time he reached high school, however, he had returned back home. Jones received a scholarship to attend the University of Alabama, where he was active in a variety of athletics and social organizations. After being told that he could not attend the law school of his choice due to his race, Jones went to Howard University, where he earned a B.A. degree in 1949 and an M.A. degree in 1950. Jones would later do doctoral work at the University of California and earned another M.A. degree from Governors State University.

Jones' involvement in politics began after returning home from Howard University in 1950. In the early 1950s, he remarked to a reporter that he might run for president and his outspokenness drew attention from political leaders in Washington, D.C. Heavily involved in the Civil Rights Movement, Jones was also making political friends and by 1965 was working for the U.S. departments of Justice and Commerce. Jones continued to move around in political appointments, serving in a variety of posts throughout the South, as well as spending a year in Bangkok, Thailand, as a deputy director of the Peace Corps. In the early 1980s, Jones ran for Congress while continuing to grow Paul Jones Enterprises, a real estate holding firm, which he is still involved with to this day.

In addition to his long history with politics, Jones amassed a vast collection of African American artwork. The collection, which was recently given to the University of Delaware for display, is considered one of the largest and most complete collections of its kind. Jones also served on the boards of museums, historical societies and arts funding agencies, including the Atlanta History Center, the Georgia Museum of Art in Athens, and the Metropolitan Atlanta Art Fund.

Jones passed away on January 26, 2010 at the age of 81.

Jones was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on August 16, 2003.

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Paul Jones was conducted by Jodi Merriday and Larry Crowe on August 16, 2003, August 23, 2005 and June 24, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 11 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civic leader Paul Jones (1928 - 2010 ) has held numerous political appointments and real estate holdings, and is an avid collector of African American art.

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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:

Jones, Paul R. (Paul Raymond), 1928-2010

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Merriday, Jodi (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Jones, Paul R. (Paul Raymond), 1928-2010--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:

Art Collector

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers

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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 Paul Jones, August 16, 2003, August 23, 2005 and June 24, 2005. 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 Paul Jones, Section A2003\_195\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Paul Jones was born on June 1, 1928 in Bessemer, Alabama into a family of tenant farmers and miners. He recalls visiting an uncle's tenant farm of over 600 acres, as well as relatives that lived near old plantations, where he stayed in former slave quarters. Jones describes his parents as having been very active in

the church; his mother, Ella Reed Jones, was a Sunday school teacher and his father, William Jones, was a deacon. William Jones worked at the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company, a subsidiary of the United States Steel Corporation, also U.S. Steel. His father was a founding member of the Bessemer, Alabama chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Jones remembers labor organizing in Bessemer, including a miners' strike that resulted in several deaths. Jones describes race relations in Alabama, and describes how boxer Joe Louis influenced southern race relations.

Video Oral History Interview with Paul Jones, Section A2003\_195\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Paul Jones' parents, Ella Reed Jones and William Jones, were born in Newbern, Alabama and raised in the southern "Black Belt" region, where they met as children. Both were widowed prior to their marriage. Jones talks about his mother's garden and her early education in Marion, Alabama. He also talks about his religious upbringing and educational background. He learned to read early and began school at five years old. Later, Jones was sent north to New York City to study in integrated schools. He recalls visiting his family in Alabama in the summers and discovering that his accent had changed. Jones recalls other childhood memories, including arriving in New York and playing football. Jones attended Alabama State Teachers College in Montgomery, Alabama for two years before transferring to Howard University in Washington D.C. Jones was hired at the Justice Department as a Community Relations Specialist where he worked on desegregation efforts in the South. He also describe running for president in the 1950s.

Video Oral History Interview with Paul Jones, Section A2003\_195\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:15 ?

Paul Jones shares memories of Bessemer, Alabama including trips to the dry goods store, the sounds of the mining camps, and the smell of pulp mills. He also describes hog killings and dog fights. Jones attended Bessemer's Dunbar High School and received a scholarship to attend Alabama State Teachers College in Montgomery, Alabama. He was elected president of his freshman class. After completing two years at Alabama State, Jones applied to the University of Alabama School of Law, where he was denied admission due to his race. However, Jones was admitted to Howard University in Washington, D.C. and completed his undergraduate studies in 1949. Jones served on the student council and studied under Emmett Dorsey. He earned his M.A. degree in 1950. Jones then worked for the Birmingham Interracial Committee of the Jefferson County Coordinating Council for Social Forces in Jefferson County, Alabama. He describes how the Whites Citizens Council led to the dismantling of the integrated Race Relations Institute.

Video Oral History Interview with Paul Jones, Section A2003\_195\_001\_004, TRT: 0:31:15 ?

Paul Jones left the Birmingham Interracial Committee of the Jefferson County Coordinating Council for Social Forces in Jefferson County, Alabama in the late 1950s. He started Paul's Package Store in downtown Bessemer, Alabama, building his business by directing people at the state liquor stores to his own store. He also built relationships with the Police Chief and Public Safety Commissioner to protect his business interests. However, the public safety commissioner had a reputation for predatory lending. Jones received a fellowship to study at the Yale Center of Alcohol Studies. He went to work in Alabama's courts, where he met A.G. Gaston. Jones ran Gaston's restaurant for several years before moving to California for government work. Jones talks about his role in the Community Relations Service during the Selma to Montgomery march in 1965 on Pettus Bridge. He was awarded for his work there and for his work in Watts, California that same year. Jones also talks about

awards he received for his art collection.

Video Oral History Interview with Paul Jones, Section A2003\_195\_002\_005, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Paul Jones describes his involvement with the Peace Corps and the Richard Nixon Administration's Committee to Re-Elect the President (CRP or CREEP). Jones worked as a Peace Corps deputy director in Thailand where he was stationed in Bangkok after having studied Thai in Washington, D.C. and at the University of Hawaii. Upon returning to the United States, Jones was hired to the Committee to Re-elect the President for Nixon's re-election efforts following the Watergate Scandal. He shared an office with G. Gordon Liddy, who was later convicted for his role in Watergate. Jones talks about political relationships during the Nixon-McGovern presidential race, the role of political pragmatism, and opportunism in politics. He talks about small business support of Nixon because of the Small Business Administration and securing black votes and money for Nixon's re-election. He mentions high profile African Americans who were vocal Nixon supporters and talks about George McGovern's loss in the 1972 presidential election.

Video Oral History Interview with Paul Jones, Section A2003\_195\_002\_006, TRT: 0:30:40 ?

Paul Jones describes benefits African American businesses received during Richard Nixon's presidency. He also talks about the Model Cities Program and corporate support generated during his tenure as director in Charlotte, North Carolina from the late 1960s to 1971. Jones talks about the Watergate scandal and subsequent hearings, as well as political patronage in Chicago, Illinois and Washington, D.C. In the 1960s, Jones began collecting art. He decided to focus the bulk of his collection on the works of under-collected and underexposed black artists. He talks about an early encounter with artist Herman Kofi Bailey and laments not buying his artwork. He cultivated his taste by networking with artists. Jones began lending his growing collection out as a means of helping those artists gain exposure. In the mid-1960s, Jones was asked to join the executive board of the High Museum in Atlanta, Georgia as well as its 20th Century Art Society, and Collector's Club.

Video Oral History Interview with Paul Jones, Section A2003\_195\_003\_007, TRT: 0:30:20 ?

Paul Jones comments on his political career. In the 1950s, Jones commented to an Associated Press reporter that he intended to run for president of the United States. He was then asked by Adlai Stevenson and John Sparkman to help with their 1952 presidential campaign. Twenty years later, Jones served on Richard Nixon's Committee to Re-Elect the President. In 1986, Jones ran for Congress. Jones talks about his membership to the Collector's Club in Atlanta, Georgia. He became a trusted member and showed his art to other collectors. His goal was to use his collection to further the careers of artists by lending his work to galleries, colleges, churches, and other institutions. He recalls damage to his collection due to improper handling and the need for insurance and professional art handlers. Jones talks about photography and photography as fine art as well as famed black photographers, like James Van Der Zee, P. H. Polk, Roy DeCarava and HistoryMaker Gordon Parks.

Video Oral History Interview with Paul Jones, Section A2003\_195\_003\_008, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Paul Jones recalls hosting a TV variety show in Alabama in the 1950s. The show featured black DJs and musicians, including HistoryMaker B. B. King. Jones talks about the work of black photographers and visual artists such as Ming Smith, Adger Cowans, and Herman Kofi Bailey. He considers the overlap between painters and photographers and the documentary aspect of photography. In the late 1980s or early 1990s, Jones came into contact with the art history department at the University of Delaware in Newark, Delaware after searching

for a home for his collection. He describes building a relationship with the school and its art history department, and donating his collection there. Jones stipulated that the school establish a permanent exhibition and full-time curator, a position that would be filled by HistoryMaker Amalia Amaki. At the time of the interview, Jones' art collection exceeded 2,000 pieces.

Video Oral History Interview with Paul Jones, Section A2003\_195\_003\_009, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Paul Jones lists the conditions of his donation of art to the University of Delaware in Newark, Delaware including requiring that an exchange program with a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) be established. Jones talks about HBCUs lack of resources to take care of their art collections. He describes damages to artworks by Aaron Douglas and other black artists whose works were housed in HBCU storage. He also talks about the attention now being given to black artists such as P. H. Polk, whose photos of George Washington Carver were acquired by both Jones and the National Park Service. Jones talks about the potential value of HBCUs making investments in African American art, both for student education and in fundraising. He describes the business and politics of selling art, how trained and untrained black artists are evaluated in the visual arts market and the need for patronage and support for black artists.

Video Oral History Interview with Paul Jones, Section A2003\_195\_003\_010, TRT: 0:26:30 ?

Paul Jones talks about some collectors' preference for "naïve" art versus the art of trained African American artists as well as his affiliation with the National Conference of Artists. He laments the lack of diversity in the arts world and the lack of accreditation for African American museums. Seeing the value of African American art increasing, he encourages an increased number of African American collectors, as well as the development of strategies for retaining African American interest in the works of African American artists. Jones describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community, looks back on his accomplishments and his art collecting and considers his life, his legacy, and how he would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Paul Jones, Section A2003\_195\_003\_011, TRT: 0:17:40 ?

Paul Jones narrates his photographs.