

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr.

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Martin, B. Herbert, 1942-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr.,
Dates:	December 11, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	9 Betacame SP videocassettes (4:20:47).
Abstract:	Minister Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr. (1942 -) was president and executive director of the Chicago South Side NAACP, chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority, and executive director of the Chicago Commission on Human Relations. He is also the pastor of The Progressive People's Community Center – The People's Church. Martin was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 11, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_294
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Minister Reverend B. Herbert Martin was born December 28, 1942, in the historic all-black town of Mound Bayou, Mississippi. He attended Mound Bayou Training School. Martin was set back in his senior year when he was severely beaten by local white thugs, and graduated from Mound Bayou High School in 1963. Martin earned a B.A. from Philander Smith College in 1967, studied at Payne Theological Seminary before receiving a master's of divinity from Garrett Theological Seminary in 1970.

Martin served as pastor Sherman, Clair Christian, Gresham, and St. Mark United Methodist churches from 1968 to 1979. He then became the pastor of The Progressive People's Community Center – The People's Church where he still presides.

Martin joined the NAACP as a child under the Mississippi state leadership of Dr. T.R.M. Howard. As president and executive director of the Chicago South Side NAACP, Martin led the largest branch in the nation. He served as chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority, and as executive director of the Chicago Commission on Human Relations. Martin is active in many religious and civic activities such as the boards of Christian Laity of Chicago, One Church One Child, the Million Man March – Chicago Organizing Committee, and Operation PUSH. In 1999, Martin attempted to heal racial tensions caused by the baseball bat beating of a black youth by white teens in Chicago's Bridgeport community.

He is probably best known as the pastor of late Chicago Mayor Harold Washington. Martin lives in Chicago where he has two daughters and a son. For his outreach activities in El-Mina, Ghana he was awarded the name, Kojo Oyeadizie.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 11, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 9 Betacame SP videocassettes. Minister Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr. (1942 -) was president and executive director of the Chicago South Side NAACP, chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority, and executive director of the Chicago Commission on Human Relations. He is also the pastor of The Progressive People’s Community Center – The People’s Church.

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:

- Martin, B. Herbert, 1942-
- Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)
- Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

- African Americans--Interviews
 - Martin, B. Herbert, 1942- --Interviews
-

Organizations:

- HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)
-

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Pastor

HistoryMakers® Category:

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 B. Herbert Martin, Sr., December 11, 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 B. Herbert Martin, Sr., Section A2003_294_001_001, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr. was born on December 28, 1942 in Mound Bayou, Mississippi. His mother, Cassino Braboy Martin, born in 1922 to Mary Black Braboy and Page Brayboy, Jr. Martin can trace the Braboy family to North Carolina. The Black family were some of the earliest settlers in Mound Bayou, which was founded by Benjamin T. Green, Isaiah T. Montgomery and

other former slaves from Davis Bend, a plantation owned by Jefferson Davis's brother. The town became an independent and self-sufficient African American community. Martin's maternal great-uncle Theodore H. Black, Jr. was an entrepreneur who owned a grocery store, juke joint and hotel in the town. Martin saw African Americans in prominent positions in his community and also encountered civil rights leader Dr. T.R.M. Howard, the founder of the town hospital and zoo. Martin never met his biological father. His mother married Willie Martin, a World War II veteran and brick mason. Martin was raised by his stepfather and legally adopted his last name.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr., Section A2003_294_001_002, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr.'s mother and grandmother told stories about his family's Native American and African ancestry and preserved the traditions that heritage. His stepfather's successful home building career allowed the family to move from the cotton fields into the town of Mound Bayou, Mississippi. Martin describes the sights, sounds and smells of his childhood. Growing up in the Mississippi Delta region he hunted; visited with friends; and listened to legendary musicians and Mississippi blues and gospel music. At the age of nine, he received the call to ministry. In 1960, Martin joined SNCC. While walking home from a training session given by HistoryMaker Reverend James Bevel, Martin and his best friend were brutally attacked by a group of white men. Afterwards, his friend's family fled to Detroit, Michigan. Martin attended Mound Bayou Training School where he initially struggled academically. He discovered his gift for oratory in his English class and earned a dramatic scholarship to college.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr., Section A2003_294_001_003, TRT: 0:31:19 ?

Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr. had a spiritual awakening at the age of nine which led him to the ministry. He was influenced by Reverend T.C. Johnson of Bethel A.M.E. Church in Mound Bayou, Mississippi as well as visiting Civil Rights Leaders like Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and HistoryMaker Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth. During his high school years at Mound Bayou Training School, he participated in student council, football and the dramatics club. He survived a vicious beating from a group of white men that left him fearful for a long time. His maternal grandmother's spiritual teachings aided his recovery. In 1963, Martin entered Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas and obtained a bachelor's degree in social work. After college, he moved to Chicago, Illinois to work for Methodist Youth Services as a counselor to at-risk young men. He recalls attending the March on Washington in 1963, the impact of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the impact of Dr. King's death in 1968.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr., Section A2003_294_001_004, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr. recalls the pain of witnessing a childhood playmate initiated into the Ku Klux Klan. In 1968, Martin was working on Chicago, Illinois' West Side when riots broke out following the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. That September, Martin entered Garrett Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois, the alma mater of HistoryMaker Reverend Dr. Kwame John R. Porter. Martin was subpoenaed by Illinois State's Attorney Edward Hanrahan and in danger of being ex-communicated by his church, because he gave sanctuary to protesters fleeing the police during the 1968 Democratic National Convention. These experiences, during the Days of

Rage, were Martin's initiation into Chicago politics. He noticed that the civil rights coalition between African Americans and Jews began to disintegrate after 1969. Martin was inspired by Harold Washington's vision for ethnic unity and as president of the Chicago South Side NAACP, was an early supporter of his mayoral campaign in 1983.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr., Section A2003_294_001_005, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr. was invested as pastor of Progressive Community Church in 1982. At the service, incumbent Chicago, Illinois Mayor Jane Byrne and mayoral candidate Harold Washington vied for the congregation's support and Martin's endorsement. Byrne donated money to the church, but Washington joined the church, successfully undermining Byrne's ploy. After Washington was elected Mayor of Chicago in 1983, Martin delivered the invocation at the first City Council meeting of his term and continued to minister to Washington for throughout his mayorship. Martin delivered the eulogy at Washington's funeral in 1987. He attributes the surge in violence in Chicago's African American communities during the late-1980s to the anger and dissention following Washington's death. In 1997, following the assault of black youths Lenard Clark and Clevon Nicholson in the Bridgeport neighborhood, Martin served as a mediator between the African American and white ethnic communities.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr., Section A2003_294_001_006, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr. held an interfaith service at Progressive Community Church to bridge the white and African American communities after a racially motivated attack by white youths on two African American teens in Bridgeport, Chicago, Illinois. Martin facilitated a reconciliation between one of the victims, Lenard Clark and the family of an attacker, Frank Caruso, Jr. Martin was criticized by some for his role in this effort. His work as a minister has led him to confront the effects of anger, pain and a need for "healthy paranoia." During Mayor Harold Washington's administration, Martin was appointed chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority; he was forced to resign after people were angered by his public protest against HUD. HistoryMaker Eugene Sawyer, then mayor of Chicago, appointed him as chairman of Commission of Human Relations but Martin resigned, when he realized his reforms would not be welcome. Since then, he has focused on ministry and community programs such as One Church, One Child.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr., Section A2003_294_001_007, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr. describes his philosophy of religion, which is centered on unconditional love. He acknowledges the challenges of enacting this philosophy at times and also acknowledges the challenges of bridging religious differences. He believes such acceptance and love is necessary in his role as minister of Progressive Community Church in Chicago, Illinois. Martin worries about the impact of mega-churches, such as those headed by HistoryMaker Bishop T.D. Jakes, on smaller, local churches. He welcomes the return of African traditions and spirituality to African American churches, especially as his upbringing emphasized this syncretism. Martin has participated in fostering cultural exchange between African Americans and Africans during his travels to the West Coast of Africa. However, his visit to the Temple of Python in Benin, Ghana led him to conclude that some spiritual traditions may not be benign.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr., Section A2003_294_001_008,

TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr.'s travels to Ghana in 2001 led him to reconnect with African traditions of spirituality. Martin became an honorary member of the Asona clan of the Fante. During a naming ceremony, he was given the name Kojo Oyeadijie, meaning "man of peace, one who creates order." He also visited El-Mina Castle and received a Sankofa, a symbol of return. His encounters with spiritual richness and culture during his visit to Africa enabled him to dispel the racist myth that the continent lacks morality and civilization. His journey also gave him hope for the possibilities of Pan-Africanism to create positive change for both the African diaspora and the continent. Martin addresses aspects of U.S. foreign policy during President George W. Bush's administration that reveal the capricious nature of evil. Martin describes his hopes for the African American community, considers what he would have done differently and describes how he would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr., Section A2003_294_001_009,
TRT: 0:21:18 ?

Reverend B. Herbert Martin, Sr. narrates his photographs.