

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Paul Adams, III

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Adams, Paul, III, 1940-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Paul Adams, III,
Dates:	March 11, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:56:42).
Abstract:	Civil rights activist and high school principal Paul Adams, III (1940 -) is the founding director of the independent Providence-St. Mel High School. Adams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 11, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_307
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Born September 14, 1940, Paul Joseph Adams III learned the value of education from his parents, Patsy Lois and Paul Adams, Jr., who enrolled him in private elementary and high schools in his hometown of Montgomery, Alabama. After receiving a B.A. from Alabama State University, Adams moved north to Chicago, where he worked in mental health education while earning his M.A. in psychology from Northeastern Illinois University.

In 1971, Adams was hired as director of guidance for Providence-St. Mel School, a private Catholic high school in Chicago. He became the school's principal a year later. When the Archdiocese of Chicago withdrew funding for the school in 1978, Adams spearheaded a national campaign to raise money for the school. In response to his publicity-seeking efforts and the support of the Providence-St. Mel students and community, the school received local and national media attention. Donations poured in from across the country, and Adams transitioned Providence-St. Mel into a not-for-profit independent school.

At Providence-St. Mel, Adams focused on developing a strong academic standard while enforcing strict disciplinary codes. To guarantee the safety of his students, he moved into the vacant convent inside the school to ward off thieves and vandals. His dedication became legendary and during the next two decades, Adams successfully transformed Providence-St. Mel into a premier learning institution for African American students.

Since 1996, Adams has served as president of Providence-St. Mel School, managing an annual budget in excess of \$6 million. He is still very active in planning the curriculum for the school, which has expanded to include elementary and middle grades. Under Adams' leadership, every one of Providence-St. Mel's graduating seniors has been accepted to institutions of higher learning.

Adams has received numerous awards for his efforts, including the McDonald's Education Achievement Award, the African-American Male Image Award, the Rozell R. Nesbitt Community Education Award, and four honorary doctorates. Adams was named an American Hero in Education by *Reader's Digest* and was voted Man of the Year by the Chicago Urban League.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Paul Adams, III was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 11, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civil rights activist and high school principal Paul Adams, III (1940 -) is the founding director of the independent Providence-St. Mel High School.

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:

Adams, Paul, III, 1940-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

Adams, Paul, III, 1940- --Interviews
African Americans--Interviews

African American school administrators--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

African American school principals--Interviews

King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968--

Civil rights movements--Alabama--History

Education, Urban--Social aspects--United States

Montgomery Bus Boycott, Montgomery, Ala., 1955-1956

Selma to Montgomery Rights March (1965 : Selma, Ala.)

Segregation in education

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

High School Principal

HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

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 Adams, III, March 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 Paul Adams, III, Section A2003_307_001_001, TRT: 0:28:35 ?

Educator Paul Adams discusses his attempts at finding out more about his family background. He discusses memories of his mother and his father. Adams remembers his segregated childhood neighborhood in Montgomery, Alabama as being full of role models and mentors. Adams describes himself as a child and reflects on his commitment to the Civil Rights Movement as a teenager. Finally, Adams discusses why he does not attend church.

African American school administrators--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

African American school principals--Interviews.

King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968.

Civil rights movements--Alabama--History.

Education, Urban--Social aspects--United States.

Montgomery Bus Boycott, Montgomery, Ala., 1955-1956.

Selma to Montgomery Rights March (1965 : Selma, Ala.).

Segregation in education.

Video Oral History Interview with Paul Adams, III, Section A2003_307_001_002, TRT: 0:29:05 ?

Educator Paul Adams discusses his experience of the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955. Additionally, Adams remembers his first impressions of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Furthermore, Adams discusses his and the overall youth commitment to the Civil Rights Movement. He also tells of being kicked out of Alabama State University for participating in a demonstration. Finally, Adams discusses how the death of Emmitt Till and the use of television were critical in the marked beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement.

Video Oral History Interview with Paul Adams, III, Section A2003_307_001_003, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Educator Paul Adams details his relocation to Chicago in 1962. Adams remembers his last interaction with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and discusses the moment he found out about his assassination. Adams also details his participation in the 1965 March from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. Finally, Adams provides a brief history of Providence-St. Mel School in Chicago, Illinois and his eventual appointment as principal.

Video Oral History Interview with Paul Adams, III, Section A2003_307_001_004, TRT: 0:29:15 ?

Educator Paul Adams discusses how he transformed Providence-St. Mel into an independent school in 1978. Adams also attributes the academic success of Providence-St. Mel to their teachers' commitment to the students, to its structured environment, to students' early exposure to travel, and its accelerated educational paradigm. Finally, Adams discusses how his being Protestant does not conflict with his mission to educate students at a Catholic school.

Video Oral History Interview with Paul Adams, III, Section A2003_307_001_005, TRT: 0:29:15 ?

Educator Paul Adams discusses his personal philosophy of education which includes the teaching of values and classes on Dr. Martin Luther King's holiday. Adams discusses Providence-St. Mel's use of teachers and students as role models for success. He also discusses how politicians should be held accountable for their schools' academic performance. Additionally, he explains that the educational system has failed to educate youth by focusing on incarceration instead of dealing with behavioral and illiteracy problems. Finally, Adams explains that it is hard work for a school to work as well as Providence-St. Mel but emphasizes that any school can do it.

Video Oral History Interview with Paul Adams, III, Section A2003_307_001_006, TRT: 0:30:32 ?

Educator Paul Adams discusses the athletic performance, the racial makeup, the accelerated curriculum and the disciplinary rules of Providence-St. Mel. Adams explains the need for increased fundraising for Providence-St. Mel for the sakes of teachers' compensation and student tuition assistance. He also discusses his legacy and how he wants to be remembered. Finally, Adams shares a multitude of photographs.