

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Raymond Bowen

---

## 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>	Bowen, Raymond C. (Raymond Cobb), 1934-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Raymond Bowen,
<b>Dates:</b>	June 9, 2004
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2004
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:13:45).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Academic administrator and community college president Raymond Bowen (1934 - 2021) served as president of Shelby State Community College in Memphis, professor at Cleveland State University, and dean of academic affairs and president of LaGuardia Community College of the City University of New York. Bowen was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 9, 2004, in Baltimore, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2004_067
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Scientist turned college administrator Raymond Cobb Bowen was born September 19, 1934 in New Haven, Connecticut. Growing up in the Elm Haven public housing projects, Bowen's parents, Raymond Curtis Bowen and Lucille Cobb Bowen, were frustrated in their attempts to gain a higher education and wanted more for their son. He attended Baldwin and Winchester elementary schools and graduated from James Hillhouse High School in 1952. He earned a B.A. in zoology in 1956 from the University of Connecticut, an M.S. in biology from the University of New Mexico in 1962 and a Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut in parasitology and biochemistry in 1966. From 1956 to 1959, Bowen served in the United States Army.

Beginning his professional career in post doctoral research at Ohio Wesleyan University and the University of Illinois (1966-67), Bowen was an assistant professor of biology at Cleveland State University in 1968 when black student and community leaders called for black college administrators at the school. Bowen, with student support, accepted an offer to become assistant to the president and then dean of developmental programs at Cleveland State from 1968 to 1971. At LaGuardia Community College of the City University of New York, Bowen was hired as associate professor of natural sciences in 1971, but within the same year was made associate dean of faculty and then in 1973, he became dean of academic affairs. In 1975, Bowen accepted the post of vice president for academic and student affairs for the Community College of Baltimore. In 1982, he was appointed president of Shelby State Community College in Memphis. Back at LaGuardia Community College, Bowen served a joint appointment as president and professor of natural and applied sciences from 1989 to 1999. His two priorities at LaGuardia were multiculturalism and economic development. Bowen spearheaded collaborations with The Dominican Republic, China, South Africa, Columbia and the United Kingdom. Retired in 1999, he served as visiting professor at the Morgan State University Graduate School.

A prolific writer, Bowen has published widely on multiculturalism and diversity. Bowen serves on the board of

Phelps-Stokes Fund and the American Council on Education among many other affiliations. Among his many awards is the designation by *Black Issues in Higher Education* as One of the Outstanding College Leaders of the 20th Century. He lived in Baltimore.

Bowen passed away on August 23, 2021.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Raymond Bowen was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 9, 2004, in Baltimore, Maryland, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Academic administrator and community college president Raymond Bowen (1934 - 2021) served as president of Shelby State Community College in Memphis, professor at Cleveland State University, and dean of academic affairs and president of LaGuardia Community College of the City University of New York.

---

## 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:

Bowen, Raymond C. (Raymond Cobb), 1934-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Lane, Edgar Carey (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Bowen, Raymond C. (Raymond Cobb), 1934---Interviews

## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

LaGuardia Community College

---

## Occupations:

College President

---

## 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 Raymond Bowen, June 9, 2004. 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 Raymond Bowen, Section A2004\_067\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:41  
?

Raymond C. Bowen was born on September 19, 1934 in New Haven, Connecticut. His mother, Lucille Cobb Bowen, was born in New Haven in 1915. Her paternal family came to Glastonbury, Connecticut from Sedalia, North Carolina and her maternal family lived in New England since the 1750s. She studied languages in high school and spoke Spanish and French fluently. His father, Raymond Curtis Bowen, was born in 1912 in Hartford, Connecticut and moved to New Haven to be raised by a relative after his mother's death. He won a scholarship to The Ohio State University but was denied entry on the basis of race. He worked as a Red Cap for the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, a steward for a fraternity house at Yale University and as a job trainer. Bowen's parents both emphasized education. Bowen grew up in the Elm Haven Housing Projects where he enjoyed school, watching football games and listening to classical and jazz music. He and his two siblings attended James Hillhouse Comprehensive High School.

Video Oral History Interview with Raymond Bowen, Section A2004\_067\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:18  
?

Raymond Bowen attended Winchester Elementary School and graduated from James Hillhouse Comprehensive High School in New Haven, Connecticut. He attended the University of Connecticut in Storrs, where he studied zoology and joined Beta Sigma Gamma Fraternity. In 1956, he entered the U.S. Army and was stationed at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas where he worked as a medical laboratory technician. After completing his service at Sandia Base in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Bowen obtained a master's degree in biology from the University of New Mexico. He returned to the University of Connecticut for his doctoral degree and accepted a post-doctoral fellowship at Ohio Wesleyan University. In 1966, Bowen was hired at Cleveland State University. The aftermath of the Glenville Shootout led to student demands for a black administrator. Bowen became assistant to the president, but had little power to enact change. In 1971, he accepted a position as associate dean at La Guardia Community College in New York City.

Video Oral History Interview with Raymond Bowen, Section A2004\_067\_001\_003, TRT: 0:31:12  
?

Raymond Bowen left LaGuardia Community College in New York City after an altercation with founding President Joseph Shenker and became vice president of Baltimore County Community College in Maryland. In 1982, he became president of Shelby State Community College in Memphis, becoming the first black college president in Tennessee. He honed his public speaking skills and style by addressing local black churches and met local politicians Harold Ford, Sr. and W.W. Herenton. After going to Morocco to help set up a community college system, Bowen returned to LaGuardia as its first black president in 1989. He was overwhelmed by speaking requests from the black community in Queens; the presence of HistoryMaker Reverend Dr. Floyd Flake relieved some of the burden. Bowen describes his goals of multiculturalism and economic development, the rewards of being LaGuardia's president and his hopes and concerns for the black community. Bowen also shares memories of Raymond St. Jacques and several Cleveland Browns players.

Video Oral History Interview with Raymond Bowen, Section A2004\_067\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:24  
?

Raymond Bowen volunteered with Carl B. Stokes' 1968 mayoral campaign in

Cleveland, Ohio, was on the board of Karamu House and met HistoryMaker Lou Stokes. Bowen has also conducted research into sickle cell anemia and parasitology. His books about college administration include 'Gateways to Democracy: Six Urban Community College Systems' and 'From the Projects to the Presidency: An African American Odyssey.' During his retirement, Bowen helped form the Historically Black College and Universities/Minority Institutions to ask USAID for grant money to fight A.I.D.S. in Africa. Although the grant was not funded, Bowen believes it is important for black institutions to join forces. Bowen describes the different college student populations in the Baltimore area, administrative changes at Olive-Harvey Community College of the City Colleges of Chicago and his hopes and concerns for the African American community. He also reflects upon his life and legacy. Bowen enjoyed being interviewed by The HistoryMakers.

Video Oral History Interview with Raymond Bowen, Section A2004\_067\_001\_005, TRT: 0:15:10  
?

Raymond C. Bowen narrates his photographs.