

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Lee P. Brown

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Brown, Lee P.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Lee P. Brown,
Dates:	November 4, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:09:10).
Abstract:	Mayor The Honorable Lee P. Brown (1937 -) served as the mayor of Houston, Texas, from 1998 to 2004. In addition to his mayoral terms, Brown also served as the director of the White House Office of National Drug Policy for the Clinton administration. Later in his career, Brown founded the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives and served as chairman and CEO of the Brown Group International. Brown was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 4, 2004, in Houston, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_226
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

The first African American Mayor of Houston, Texas, Lee Patrick Brown was born on October 4, 1937, in Wewoka, Oklahoma. His parents, Andrew and Zelma Brown were small farmers. A high school athlete, Brown started his professional life as a police officer in San Jose, California in 1960. That same year, he graduated from Fresno State University with his B.S. degree in criminology. In 1964, Brown earned a master's degree in sociology from San Jose State University where he became assistant professor in 1968. At the University of California, Berkeley, he earned his master's degree in criminology in 1968 and his PhD in 1970.

Brown became chairman and professor of the Department of Administration of Justice at Portland State University in 1968. In 1972, he was appointed associate director, Institute of Urban Affairs and Research and professor of Public Administration and director of Criminal Justice programs at Howard University. In 1974, Brown was named Sheriff of Multnomah County, Oregon, and in 1976, director of the Department of Justice Services. As public safety commissioner of Atlanta, Georgia, from 1978 to 1982, Brown and his staff cracked the Atlanta Child Murders case.

As Houston, Texas' chief of police, from 1982 to 1990, Brown developed Neighborhood Oriented Policing, a program employing community policing techniques. From 1990 to 1992, he was police commissioner of New York City. President Clinton appointed Brown director of the White House Office of National Drug Policy or "Drug Czar", a cabinet level position from 1993 to 1996. After spending some time teaching at Texas Southern University and Rice University, Brown was elected mayor of Houston, Texas, in 1998. As mayor, he was able to build the Metro light rail system, attract a new NFL team, and expand his philosophy of neighborhood oriented government.

A founder of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE), Brown has organized around the needs of African American police executives. Today, Brown is chairman and CEO of Brown Group International, which uses the extensive expertise of its founder to develop solutions to complex problems in public safety, homeland security, crisis management, government relations, international trade, and other concerns.

The father of four grown children with his late wife, Yvonne, Brown now lives with his wife Frances in Houston.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Lee P. Brown was conducted by Larry Crowe on November 4, 2004, in Houston, Texas, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Mayor The Honorable Lee P. Brown (1937 -) served as the mayor of Houston, Texas, from 1998 to 2004. In addition to his mayoral terms, Brown also served as the director of the White House Office of National Drug Policy for the Clinton administration. Later in his career, Brown founded the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives and served as chairman and CEO of the Brown Group International.

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:

Brown, Lee P.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Brown, Lee P.--Interviews

African American mayors--Texas--Houston--Interviews

African American executives--Interviews

Universities and colleges--Faculty--Interviews

Police chiefs--New York (State)--New York--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Houston (Tex.)

Occupations:

Mayor

HistoryMakers® Category:

PoliticalMakers

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 The Honorable Lee P. Brown, November 4, 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 The Honorable Lee P. Brown, Section A2004_226_001_001, TRT: 0:30:20 ?

The Honorable Lee P. Brown was born on October 4, 1937 in Wewoka, Oklahoma. His mother, Zelma Edwards Brown, was born in 1909 in Mississippi. She then moved with her family to Wewoka, where the family relied on one another to help each other out. While only completing the second grade, Brown's mother encouraged her children to pursue their education. Reticent yet hardworking, his father, Andrew Brown, was born around 1910 in Oklahoma where he attended school through the first grade. In Wewoka, Brown's family lived near a creek and kept goats in the backyard. During the Dust Bowl, they migrated by truck to Fresno County, California where they worked on a grape farm with several families. Eventually, Brown relocated to a farm in Fowler, California, an agricultural town, where he lived with his parents and six siblings. In addition to picking grapes and cotton, he attended Fowler Elementary School and Fowler High School. As a student he was studious and athletic.

African American mayors--Texas--Houston--Interviews.

African American executives--Interviews.

Universities and colleges--Faculty--Interviews.

Police chiefs--New York (State)--New York--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Lee P. Brown, Section A2004_226_001_002, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

The Honorable Lee P. Brown enjoyed reading African American history and playing football as a student in Fowler, California. He also attended St. Paul A.M.E. Church and joined the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Brown remembers when Japanese Americans were released from internment. Upon receiving a football scholarship, Brown matriculated at Fresno State College in Fresno, California where he met his first wife and worked at Fred Boyd's Hi Life Restaurant. Disappointed with the school's lack of financial aid, he transferred to San Jose State College in San Jose, California where he received his B.S. degree in criminology; and, in 1964, earned his M.A. degree in sociology. Brown, the second black police officer hired for the San Jose Police Department, was promoted to sergeant in 1966. In 1968, he received a fellowship from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Law Enforcement Assistance to complete his master's in criminology at University of California, Berkeley.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Lee P. Brown, Section A2004_226_001_003, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

The Honorable Lee P. Brown received a fellowship from the U.S. Department of Justice to pursue his M.A. degree in criminology at the University of California,

Berkeley, while working full-time as a police officer in San Jose, California. In 1968, he directed the San Jose Police Department's Police Community Relations Unit. He then pursued his Ph.D. while directing Portland State College's administration of justice program in Portland, Oregon. In 1970, when he completed his doctoral studies at the University of California in Berkeley, he became the first African American to receive his Ph.D. in criminology. Brown talks about the history of community policing, and distinguishes it from professional policing and more traditional approaches and tactics, such as preventive patrol and rapid response.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Lee P. Brown, Section A2004_226_001_004, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

The Honorable Lee P. Brown helped found Portland State College's black studies program while serving as director of the school's Department of Administration of Justice. As sheriff of Multnomah County Police Department in Oregon, he implemented team policing and directed the Department of Justice Services. In addition, he co-founded the Institute for Urban Affairs and Research at Howard University in Washington, D.C. President Jimmy Carter appointed Brown to the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration; however, Brown declined the appointment to serve as public safety commissioner for the City of Atlanta, Georgia under Maynard Jackson's second mayoral term. During his four years there, he led the investigation into the Atlanta Child Murders, which resulted in a successful arrest and prosecution. In 1982, Texas Mayor Kathryn J. Whitmire appointed Brown as chief of the Houston Police Department where his command staff was unwelcoming.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Lee P. Brown, Section A2004_226_001_005, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

The Honorable Lee P. Brown worked to reform the culture of the Houston Police Department in Houston, Texas. As police chief, Brown developed ten values that were informed by community policing. He fired abusive officers, redeveloped training programs and increased recruitment of minority officers. During his tenure, the department implemented the Positive Interaction Program to promote collaboration between officers and civic groups. Brown was the first African American president of the International Association of Chiefs of Police and a founding member of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives. When HistoryMaker David N. Dinkins was elected mayor of New York City, Brown was hired as the city's police commissioner. He introduced community policing to New York City and South Africa. In 1992, when his wife was ill, Brown resigned and returned to Houston where he directed the Black Male Initiative at Texas Southern University. He later decided to run for mayor of Houston.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Lee P. Brown, Section A2004_226_001_006, TRT: 0:31:10 ?

The Honorable Lee P. Brown was appointed director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy by President Bill Clinton in 1993. There, he developed the nation's drug strategy, which focused on reducing the demand for drugs through prevention, education and treatment. He also worked to pass Clinton's Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act that included provisions for prevention programs and community policing. Brown taught public policy at Rice University in Houston, Texas. In 1998, he became mayor of Houston. His administration expanded the city's transit, arts district and sports facilities and focused on solving neighborhood issues. At the time of the interview, his consulting company, Brown Group International, was scheduled to begin

operating in 2005. In addition to drug policy in the U.S. and abroad, he shares his perspective on drug legalization. He also reflects upon his life, his mother's reaction to his success and his legacy.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Lee P. Brown, Section A2004_226_001_007, TRT: 0:09:20 ?

The Honorable Lee P. Brown, throughout his law enforcement career, witnessed the devastation of drug use. This led him to join other law enforcement officers in advising HistoryMaker Kurt Schmoke against speaking in favor of drug legalization. In this part of the interview, Brown shares his thoughts on legalizing drugs as he considers the drug policies in Amsterdam, the Netherlands and its effects in the United States. Brown concludes the tape by describing his hopes for the African American community and how he would like to be remembered.