

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Larry Langford

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Langford, Larry, 1948-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Larry Langford,
Dates:	March 21, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:41:30).
Abstract:	County commissioner and mayor Larry Langford (1948 - 2009) was a political leader, mayor of Fairfield, Alabama, and mayor of Birmingham, Alabama. Langford was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 21, 2007, in Birmingham, Alabama. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_103
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Political leader, former mayor of Fairfield, Alabama, and mayor of Birmingham, Alabama, Larry Paul Langford was born in Birmingham, Alabama on March 17, 1948, to Lillian and John Langford. Langford graduated from Parker High School and received his B.A. degree in social and behavioral science from the University of Alabama in 1972. Langford was also the recipient of an honorary doctorate from Miles College and completed studies at Harvard University in public policy.

After a short stint in the United States Air Force, Langford began his career as a television reporter for WBRC-6 and later worked in public relations for a Birmingham beer distributor before beginning his career in politics. In 1979, Langford joined the Birmingham City Council after an unsuccessful run for mayor of Birmingham. In 1982, Langford moved to Fairfield, Alabama, where he was elected mayor. He held the office for fourteen years, and in 1997, played a major role in the effort to build Vision Land Theme Park (which is now known as Alabama Adventure) to boost Alabama tourism.

After his tenure as mayor, Langford was elected in 2002 to the Jefferson County Commission, where he served as Commission President and Commissioner of Finance and General Services. While working with the Commission, Langford spearheaded nearly seventy public initiatives, including a sales tax to support school construction and a four day work week for county employees. Langford was re-elected as commissioner in 2006, after which he led efforts to bring an NBA team to the Birmingham area. In 2007, Langford was elected the thirtieth mayor of Birmingham, Alabama. After his election, Langford remained active in the Scared Heart of Jesus, teaching bible study; he and his wife, Melva, had a son and two grandsons.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Larry Langford was conducted by Denise Gines on March 21, 2007, in

Birmingham, Alabama, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. County commissioner and mayor Larry Langford (1948 - 2009) was a political leader, mayor of Fairfield, Alabama, and mayor of Birmingham, Alabama.

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:

Langford, Larry, 1948-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Langford, Larry, 1948- --Interviews

African American civic leaders--Interviews

African American politicians--Interviews

African American mayors--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Jefferson County (Ala.)

Occupations:

County Commissioner

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 Larry Langford, March 21, 2007. 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 Larry Langford, Section A2007_103_001_001, TRT: 0:28:20 ?

Larry Langford was born on March 17, 1948 in Birmingham, Alabama to Lillian Cotton Langford and John Langford. His mother, who was born in Greene County, Alabama, withdrew from school in the seventh grade to support her siblings after the death of both her parents. Langford did not know his father, who left his family when Langford was young. His mother, who worked as a domestic, waitress and chef, raised him and his five siblings in Birmingham's public housing. She often baked goods for the local homeless shelter, and led food and clothing drives for the Bryce Hospital mental institution in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. In his neighborhood, Langford recalls rent parties, basketball and ping pong games. He swam with friends in the nearby iron mines and in ditches along the railroad tracks, and listened to the music of Jackie Wilson at home. Langford began his education at Booker T. Washington Elementary School, and went on to Samuel Ullman High School, before graduating from A.H. Parker High School in 1965.

African American civic leaders--Interviews.

African American politicians--Interviews.

African American mayors--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Larry Langford, Section A2007_103_001_002, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

Larry Langford grew up in the Loveman Village public housing development in Birmingham, Alabama. After graduating from Birmingham's A.H. Parker High School in 1965, he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force, and served in the Vietnam War. Upon his return to Birmingham, he enrolled at Lawson State Community College. He earned a degree in the social sciences at the University of Alabama at Birmingham in 1972. Langford then worked for several years as a news reporter at WBRC-TV. He was elected to the Birmingham City Council in 1977; and, in 1979, ran for mayor of Birmingham, but was defeated. Then, Langford and his wife, Melva Ferguson Langford, moved to the majority black town of Fairfield, Alabama, where many residents worked for the United States Steel Corporation. Langford became Fairfield's first African American mayor in 1988. He spearheaded the VisionLand theme park development, and made capital improvements to the city's schools. From 2003, Langford served on the Jefferson County Commission.

Video Oral History Interview with Larry Langford, Section A2007_103_001_003, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Larry Langford's mother, Lillian Cotton Langford, raised him in the Christian faith, but he was not strongly religious in his youth. While serving in the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War, he was wounded, and sent to recuperate in a hospital. Langford was baptized there; and, after leaving the U.S. military, joined a Baptist church in the Titusville neighborhood of Birmingham, Alabama. Upon marrying his wife, Melva Ferguson Langford, Langford converted to Catholicism. At his parish, he led a weekly bible study class with nearly three hundred attendees. Langford describes the importance of Christianity in his life and morality, and explains how religion influences his politics, including his support of prayer in schools, and displaying the Ten Commandments in government facilities. Langford also shares his frustrations with charitable boards. He concludes this part of the interview by describing his hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Larry Langford, Section A2007_103_001_004, TRT: 0:15:40 ?

Larry Langford describes his advice to future generations, and reflects upon his life. He concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.