

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Norman Rice

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Rice, Norman B.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Norman Rice,
Dates:	October 24, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:17:30).
Abstract:	Mayor The Honorable Norman Rice (1943 -) was the first African American elected as the mayor of Seattle, Washington. Rice also served eleven years on the Seattle City Council and as a visiting professor at the University of Washington. Rice was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 24, 2007, in Seattle, Washington. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_300
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Norman Blann Rice, born on May 4, 1943 in Denver, Colorado, was the 49th mayor of Seattle, Washington. Rice was Seattle's first and only African American mayor. Rice is the youngest son of Irene Hazel Johnson (1913-1993) and Otha Patrick Rice (1916-1993). Rice's father worked as a porter on the railroads and for the United States Postal Service. He was also the owner and operator of Rice's Tap Room and Oven in Denver. Rice's mother was a caterer and a bank clerk. Rice's parents divorced when he was a teenager. His grandmother, Reverend Susie Whitman (1895-1989), Assistant Pastor at Seattle's First A.M.E. Church, was one of the first western women ministers in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. After graduating from Denver's Manual High School in 1961, Rice attended the University of Colorado at Boulder. Distressed by the segregated housing and meal facilities and frustrated by the work load, he dropped out in his second year and went to work. Between 1963 and 1969, Rice held jobs as a hospital orderly, a meter reader and an engineer's assistant. Rice arrived in Seattle in 1969 and restarted his education at Highline Community College and received his A.A. degree in 1970. Then, he attended the University of Washington through the Economic Opportunity Program (EOP). By 1972, Rice had earned his B.A. degree in communications and in 1974 his M.A. degree in public administration at the University of Washington.

Before entering city government, Rice worked as a reporter at KOMO-TV News and KIXI Radio, served as Assistant Director of the Seattle Urban League, was Executive Assistant and Director of Government Services for the Puget Sound Council of Governments and was employed as the Manager of Corporate Contributions and Social Policy at Rainier National Bank. Rice was first elected to the Seattle City Council in 1978 and reelected in 1979, 1983 and 1987, serving eleven years in all. Rice served as Mayor of Seattle from 1990 to 1997. Because of his warm personality and easy smile, he was affectionately known as "Mayor Nice." From 1995 to 1996, Mayor Rice served as president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, an association of more than a thousand of America's largest cities.

After nineteen years of public service in Seattle city government, Rice served as president of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Seattle from 1998 to 2004. Rice was also Vice Chairman of Capital Access, LLC. Rice returned to academia in 2007 as a visiting professor at the Evans School of Public Affairs at the University of Washington, where he is to lead a series of public seminars on Civic Engagement for the 21st Century.

Rice married Constance Williams on February 15, 1973. They have one adult son, Mian Rice, and one grandchild, Sekoy Elliott Rice.

Rice was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on October 24, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Norman Rice was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 24, 2007, in Seattle, Washington, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Mayor The Honorable Norman Rice (1943 -) was the first African American elected as the mayor of Seattle, Washington. Rice also served eleven years on the Seattle City Council and as a visiting professor at the University of Washington.

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:

Rice, Norman B.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Rice, Norman B.--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Seattle (Wash.)

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 Norman Rice, October 24, 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 The Honorable Norman Rice, Section A2007_300_001_001,
TRT: 0:29:50 ?

The Honorable Norman Rice was born on May 4, 1943 in Denver, Colorado to Irene Johnson Powell and Otha Rice, Sr. His maternal great-grandfather, Frank Whitman, worked in the lumber industry in Hot Springs, Arkansas. There, Rice's mother was raised by her grandparents until she was eight years old, when she moved to Denver to live with her mother, Susie Whitman. Rice's maternal grandmother later became one of the first female African Methodist Episcopal ministers in Seattle, Washington. She was often barred from churches because of her gender, but received support from Reverend Cecil L. "Chip" Murray. Rice's paternal grandparents, Orchie Rice and Orneice Smith Rice, lived in Texas, where Rice's father attended the Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College. He then obtained a job at the post office in Denver, where he met and married Rice's mother. Together, they raised four children, and opened Rice's Tap Room and Oven in Denver's Five Points neighborhood.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Norman Rice, Section A2007_300_001_002,
TRT: 0:29:10 ?

The Honorable Norman Rice was raised in Denver, Colorado, and aspired to a career in politics from an early age. He began his education at Denver's Wyman Elementary School, where he excelled in his classes, and was elected to the student council. Rice went on to attend the majority white and wealthy Morey Junior High School, where he enjoyed history and social studies, and won the Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizens Award and Scholarship Contest. He was encouraged by the principal to run for class president, but campaigned successfully for class secretary instead. When Rice was thirteen years old, his parents divorced. He enrolled at the racially diverse Manual High School, where his peers included Wellington Webb, who became Denver's first African American mayor. During high school, Rice was elected student body president. Upon graduation, he matriculated at the mostly white University of Colorado Boulder, but left after one year, and became an orderly at the Denver General Hospital.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Norman Rice, Section A2007_300_001_003,
TRT: 0:28:50 ?

The Honorable Norman Rice worked as a utility meter reader for the Public Service Company of Colorado until 1965, when he became an engineer's assistant at the IBM facility in Boulder, Colorado. During this time, he acted in community theater productions, including Lorraine Hansberry's 'A Raisin in the Sun.' In 1968, Rice left IBM, and moved to Seattle, Washington. He enrolled at Highline College, and then transferred to the University of Washington on a journalism scholarship. He interned as a local political reporter at KIXI Radio, but left after his boss refused to pay him fairly. He became a news editor at KOMO-TV, but soon became disenchanted with journalism. Then, Rice matriculated at the University of Washington's Graduate School of Public Affairs, where he wrote his thesis on minority access to electronic media. Upon graduating, he obtained a position as a media action monitor at the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, and was later promoted to assistant director.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Norman Rice, Section A2007_300_001_004,
TRT: 0:30:30 ?

The Honorable Norman Rice worked at the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, where his duties included hosting the 'Thursday Forum' program on KCTS-TV. In 1975, Rice became the head of intergovernmental relations at the Puget Sound Council of Governments, and was soon recruited to join the Rainier National Bank as a corporate contributions manager and social policy director. In 1978, Rice was elected to a vacant position on the Seattle City Council. He was reelected the following year, and served as chairman of the council's finance committee. He ran unsuccessfully against Seattle's incumbent mayor, Charles T. Royer, in 1985; and, in 1987, was reelected to the Seattle City Council, where he served as president. Following an unsuccessful bid for U.S. Congress in 1988, Rice ran for the Seattle mayoralty on a platform of citywide education reform. He remembers his opponent, attorney Doug Jewett, who campaigned to end mandatory busing in Seattle's public schools.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Norman Rice, Section A2007_300_001_005, TRT: 0:19:10 ?

The Honorable Norman Rice ran for the mayoralty of Seattle, Washington in 1989. He received fundraising support from Reverend Jesse L. Jackson's Rainbow Coalition, which opposed the busing repeal advocated by Rice's opponent. In 1989, Rice was elected as Seattle's first black mayor, and the city also voted to end mandatory busing in Seattle's public schools. After assuming office in 1990, Rice organized a summit to review the city's education goals. The meeting was attended by over two thousand citizens, and Rice used the results to determine the education budget. He implemented the seven-year Families and Education Levy, a property tax that funded daycare centers, health clinics and public school programs. Rice served a second mayoral term from 1993 to 1998, and was later appointed as a distinguished visiting practitioner at the University of Washington's Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs. Rice concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.