

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Frank Williams

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
*African-American Chronicles-Civil Rights* Oral History project

Interview # AAC-A-L-2018-032

Frank Williams, who spent his life as a Realtor in neighborhoods on the south side of Chicago that were going through racial changes, was interviewed on the dates listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *African-American Chronicles-Civil Rights* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Two sessions on Jun 13 & Jul 5, 2018

Location: F.J. Williams Realtor Office, Evergreen Park, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: \_\_\_\_\_

Edited by: \_\_\_\_\_

Transcript  
being processed

Total Pages: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Time: 1:46 + 2:00 + 3:04 / 1.76 + 2.0 + 3.07 = 6.83 hrs

Session 1: Growing up in Flint, MI, high school football and getting expelled

Session 2: Life in Chicago and early career as a Realtor in changing neighborhoods

Session 3: Realtor in south-side Chicago neighborhoods from the 1970s to present

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on October 2, 2018.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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## Abstract

Frank Williams, *African-American Chronicles*, AAC-A-L-2018-032

**Biographical Information/Overview of Interview:** Frank Williams was born on August 29, 1938 in Pine Bluff, Arkansas but grew up in an African-American neighborhood in Flint, Michigan where his relatives worked in local factories. He began delivering the Flint newspaper when he was only eleven and did so for many years. Frank attended a segregated grade school and integrated high school, where he excelled in sports, especially football. His college dreams were dashed when he was expelled from high school in his senior year for dating a white girl, Joanne Bradshaw. They eventually were married in 1961 and moved to Chicago where they believed they would have more opportunities. Frank worked as a mailman and Joanne did clerical work; in 1965 they purchased a home. It was then he realized that this could be a potential career path for him. Frank took night classes at a local community college and earned his realtor's license in March 1966. In 1971 he opened his own real estate business in Beverly.

Frank worked as a Realtor on the south side of Chicago during a time of redlining, white flight, block busting and heightened racial tensions. White home owners often employed him to sell their houses, typically to African-Americans who were moving into neighborhoods, especially in Beverly. Joanne worked as his office assistant and received hundreds of harassing phone calls from white homeowners who accused Frank of being a block-buster, turning neighborhoods black one block at a time. There were a couple of occasions where bricks were thrown through his real estate office window, and in 1975 several white youths set off a bomb outside their home. In February 1979 Frank was ordered by the District Court of the Northern District of Illinois to produce five years of files for all those properties insured by FHA and VA loans. This was in response to complaints the court had received about his business, a form of harassment that cost him several months of work.

Despite this sustained resistance and obstructions to his business, Frank persisted and continued as a Realtor. He also began teaching real estate courses in 1974 and joined a variety of real estate organizations as well as the local NAACP. In 1984 he became President of the Southside chapter of the NAACP and has held many other leadership positions and received numerous awards during his long career. These include President of the Chicago Board of Realtors in 1990, and the first Distinguished Member Award for Community Service, awarded by the Illinois Association of Realtors. Throughout his career Frank has fought passionately to help African-American families purchase a home wherever they would like. He discussed the causes of the housing bubble of the early 2000s and the severe disruptions caused by the housing collapse of 2008. In 2017 he was named to the Chicago Association of Realtors Hall of Fame.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** Selling real estate in south suburbs of Chicago; racial discrimination in housing; Fair Housing Act; redlining; blockbusting; housing bubble of the early 2000s; housing collapse of 2008; Mayor Harold Washington; growing up in Flint, Michigan; Robert Taylor Homes; Southside Chicago branch of NAACP; interracial marriage; Community Reinvestment Act; Mayor Jane Byrne

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