

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Robert (Bob) Muzikowski  
Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library  
*Alternatives in Illinois Education* Oral History project

Interview # EA-A-L-2019-008

Robert (Bob) Muzikowski, founder and CEO of the Chicago Hope Academy in Chicago, Illinois, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Education is Key-Alternatives in Education* Oral History project.

Interview: Feb 13, 2019    Location: Chicago Hope Academy, Chicago, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Philip Pogue, ALPL volunteer

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

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

Interview being  
processed

Total Pages: \_\_\_\_\_    Total Time: 1:23 / 1.38 hrs.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on October 8, 2019.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

© 2019 Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

## Abstract

### Bob Muzikowski, *Alternatives in Education*, EA-A-L-2019-008

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Robert (Bob) Muzikowski was born in Bayonne, New Jersey in March 1957. Bob grew up in Bayonne and graduated from Marist High School. While at Marist he was active in an organization which brought Christians and Jews together. He then attended Columbia University, majoring in political science and comparative literature. He also played football at Columbia. He earned a BA in 1979, and a masters' degree in 1982 from the Columbia School of International Affairs. Bob then worked for New York City, dealing with labor affairs and union contracts for the fire department, then as a financial planner for Northwestern Mutual. He later moved to Chicago and worked as a financial planner for his own company, Benefit Planning Inc. In 2004, he sold his business and devoted his energies to create Chicago Hope Academy, a college and life preparatory school located in the North Lawndale area of the near west side of Chicago. Bob is also well known in Little League Baseball circles for his promotion of youth leagues which serve the near north and near west sides of Chicago. (1991-1995). Bob has been recognized for his volunteer efforts, including receiving the Points of Light Award from President George H.W. Bush in 1991, the Little League Volunteer of the Year award, the Youth Services Award (with wife Tina) from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Bradford-One Medallion for Social Justice. Bob also authored, *Safe at Home* in 2001, which tells the story of the creation of youth baseball on the west side of Chicago. That story was also told by Daniel Coyle in *Hardball: A Season in the Projects*. The movie *Hardball* was made, with Keanu Reeves playing Muzikowski.

Bob discussed the creation of Chicago Hope Academy in 2005, located in a former Catholic school, St. Callistus. He charted the school's gradual expansion over the next fourteen years, including a new wing of classrooms and a reception area, an athletic field, a basketball stadium and a new all-weather track. A new high school building is scheduled to open in 2021 with the old high school then serving as a K-8 school. This will allow the high school to expand to 600 students. Muzikowski also discussed the school funding sources including rehabbing houses, student enrollment, tuition/scholarships/work experiences. He also talked about boarding students, the rigorous curriculum, religious studies, the yearly service projects, a week-long retreat to begin the school, student athletics and activities, teacher recruitment, school governance, the role of parents, and connections with the business community. To date, all of the school's graduates have gone on to attend college or pursue a military career.

**Subject Headings/Key Words:** Chicago Hope Academy; St. Callistus Catholic School; school recruitment for a private religious-based school; designing curriculum for a newly launched school; operation of a private boarding school; funding challenges for a private school; school sponsored service projects; Little League baseball

**Notes to the Reader:** Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

#### COPYRIGHT

**The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955**

