

The Honorable William Lacy Clay Sr.
U.S. Representative of Missouri (1969–2001)

The Long Struggle for Representation: Oral Histories of African Americans in Congress

“It’s the Plan, Not the Man”

Representative Clay Sr. explains the roots of the Congressional Black Caucus philosophy.
Interview recorded September 10, 2019

No, we had already established our credibility, and what, what happened was, the what, what really, really gave us our credibility was the kickoff of the Congressional Black Caucus, which was a dinner held here in Washington. And, and the speaker was so dynamic, Ossie Davis, and he set the tone for what the Black Caucus meant to Black America. And at that, at that dinner, they turned away, we turned away thousands of people because the fire marshal said, “You can only have X number of people. There ain’t going to be no standing room.” And so that, that really, that, that gave us our pathway because Black America accepted the plan that he laid out, laid out to the title of it, “It’s the man, it’s the plan, not the man.”