

James Johnson
Page, U.S. House of Representatives

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

Media Attention

James Johnson remembers his television appearance on *The Today Show* to explain his predicament.
Interview recorded October 24, 2019

So, this got into the media. Remember, my aunt was a journalist and so when this didn't happen, I'm sure her co-journalist friends said, "What's going on?" And it was like, "I don't know," and so—I remember being on *The Today Show*, interviewed by Frank McGee and basically said, "I don't know. I came here wanting to be a Page, but more importantly I came here because I wanted to go to the Page School and get an education and become a doctor, etc., etc." Well that, that happened and of course then that lit up the whole country. And so, it was like, oh, now what's going to happen? You know, can't—if we send this kid back to Chicago, not a good look. Remember at the time, Sam Rayburn was the Speaker and Sam Rayburn was an individual who didn't like anything that would besmirch the reputation or the honor of the House of Representatives. That was just—I mean, his, his life was the House. And obviously, he was an astute, adept politician, tactician, etc., etc. But he loved the House of Representatives as an institution. And this was bad copy for the House of Representatives.