

James Johnson
Page, U.S. House of Representatives

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

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

James Johnson remembers hearing Dr. King speak at a church near his home in 1956.
Interview recorded October 24, 2019

We all walked to see him and it was like throngs of people as you got closer. And Martin Luther King, of course, is, is an incredibly eloquent speaker with what I will call a James Earl Jones voice. When he speaks, you just listen. You know, it's, it's captivating. And he spoke about things that were spoken in my household about the injustices that were there, but what you could do to overcome them. In, in my household, I was taught things were unfair. I was also taught that the unfairness could never be an excuse for my failure, that I had to find a way to overcome the unfairness. The unfairness was a given, but things like—well, you know, I couldn't get from A to B because the man wouldn't let me do it. That was not an acceptable excuse. You had to find a way to get around that and number one was education. In my family education was felt to be the center point of how to overcome the injustices in the world.