

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Donald C. Richards

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Richards, Donald C., 1938-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Donald C. Richards,
Dates:	April 21, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:47:20).
Abstract:	Advertising executive, media executive, and association chief executive Donald C. Richards (1938 -) worked for twenty-two years at Leo Burnett becoming the company's first African American vice president. Richards is a leading advocate for diversity and affirmative action in the advertising and entertainment industries. Richards was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 21, 2003, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_085
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

A leading proponent of diversity and affirmative action in the marketing and entertainment industries, advertising executive Donald C. Richards was born in Chicago on February 24, 1938. Richards earned a B.A. in anthropology from the University of Chicago in 1959.

Richards taught high school for a year in Chicago before returning to the University of Chicago to earn his M.A. in history in 1962. He then spent three years at IBM as a systems manager before joining Leo Burnett Worldwide, one of the world's largest advertising agencies, in 1966. During his twenty-two years at Leo Burnett, Richards became the company's first African American vice president and managed accounts for such clients as Proctor and Gamble, McDonald's, Pillsbury and United Airlines. In his thirty years in advertising, Richards also worked on projects for Coca-Cola and Anheuser-Busch. He returned to Leo Burnett in 1990 to manage the company's global diversity program.

After serving as president of D.C. Richards & Associates, an ad agency specializing in multicultural marketing, Richards joined the Screen Actors Guild in New York as its associate national director of affirmative action and diversity. Richards develops and promotes educational programs, conferences and workshops designed to raise diversity awareness across the entertainment industry. He also works with professional associations of broadcasters and recording artists to help increase minority participation.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Donald C. Richards was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 21, 2003, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Advertising executive, media executive, and

association chief executive Donald C. Richards (1938 -) worked for twenty-two years at Leo Burnett becoming the company's first African American vice president. Richards is a leading advocate for diversity and affirmative action in the advertising and entertainment industries.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Richards, Donald C., 1938-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Richards, Donald C., 1938---Interviews

Advertising executives--Interviews

African American educators--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Leo Burnett Company

Occupations:

Advertising Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Donald C. Richards, April 21, 2003. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Donald C. Richards, Section A2003_085_001_001, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Donald Richards Describes his family background. His father, Charles Richards, was born in 1912 in Meridian, Mississippi, and moved to Chicago in 1916. His mother, Alice Burns, was born in 1913 in Montgomery, Alabama, and moved to

Chicago around 1922. Richards and Burns met at Wright Junior College, and gave birth to Donald Richards on February 24, 1938. Richards lived with his family in his paternal grandmother's apartment until 1945, when his parents purchased a home in Chicago's West Chesterfield neighborhood. As a child, Richards chased double decker busses, ate his grandmother's cooking and played in Abbott Park. His father was a postal worker, while his mother worked as a secretary at Carver High School. While attending Burnside Elementary School, Richards had his first racist experience. Yet, as a student at Fenger High School, Richards sang in the choir, was in the German Club, and gave his graduation speech in 1955. Richards received an academic scholarship to attend the University of Chicago in 1955.

African American families--Illinois--Chicago.

Segregation--Illinois--Chicago.

Education, Higher--Illinois.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald C. Richards, Section A2003_085_001_002, TRT: 0:28:50 ?

In 1955, Donald Richards enrolled at the University of Chicago in Chicago, Illinois. Richards studied anthropology under Sol Tax and William Boyd Allison Davis, and history under William McNeill and Louis Gottschalk. Richards pledged Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, and commonly engaged in discussions around race, religion, and intellectualism with his classmates, including HistoryMaker and author Samuel Greenlee. Richards graduated in 1959 with his B.A. degree in anthropology, but went on to take a year of education courses. Richards enrolled in a graduate program in history at the University of Chicago in 1960, and began teaching social science courses at DuSable High School, where his colleagues included HistoryMakers Margaret Burroughs and Harold Pate. He graduated with his M.A. degree in 1962. After attending a seminar given by IBM in 1963, Richards was hired by the company to design data processing systems for hospitals. In 1966, Richards was hired as a market research analyst for Leo Burnett.

African American educators.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald C. Richards, Section A2003_085_001_003, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Donald Richards talked about the history of the advertising business. In 1966, Richards was hired by Leo Burnett as a market research analyst, when there were few African Americans in the industry. Richards was eventually promoted to senior account executive where he was responsible for developing advertising strategies for Pillsbury, United Airlines, Coca Cola, and Smirnoff Vodka, among others. In 1989, Richards left Leo Burnett and went to work for Doyle Dane Bernbach Needham and The Marshaw Company, where he worked until 2001. According to Richards, African Americans were not targeted as an audience until the 1970s, when African Americans were acknowledged as a consumer group, and African American culture rose in status in mainstream society. In 2003, Richards was hired as the Associate National Director of Affirmative Action and Diversity for the Screen Actors Guild. In this capacity, Richards was responsible for increasing the visibility of minority, disabled, senior, and female actors.

Advertising.

Civil rights movements--United States.

African American business enterprises.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald C. Richards, Section A2003_085_001_004, TRT:

0:19:40 ?

In 2003, Donald Richards was hired as the Director of Affirmative Action and Diversity for the Screen Actors Guild. According to Richards, the Screen Actors Guild began an effort to help minorities obtain better film roles as early as the 1930s; the organization began doing the same for television in the 1950s and 1960s. The effort has not proven fruitful because minorities still struggle to obtain quality and leading film and television roles, and opportunities to work behind the scenes. Richards noted that, for marginalized groups to increase their visibility in the film and television industries, they have to be more vocal about their needs. The greatest challenge Richards faces is trying to communicate the importance of including marginalized groups in creative, behind the scenes roles like writing and directing. Richards shared his hopes and concerns for the African American community, and closed the interview by reflecting upon his legacy and how he would like to be remembered.

African Americans--Education (Secondary).

African Americans--Drug use.

African Americans--Economic conditions.