

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Benjamin Whitten

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Whitten, Benjamin, 1923-2012
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Benjamin Whitten,
Dates:	June 2, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:36:00).
Abstract:	Nonprofit chief executive and high school administrator Benjamin Whitten (1923 - 2012) was the first African American member of Iota Lambda Sigma honor fraternity, and has been a teacher and administrator in Baltimore City Schools for over thirty years. White is also a former president of the Baltimore Urban League. Whitten was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 2, 2004, in Baltimore, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_061
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Benjamin Carr Whitten was born on July 25, 1923, in Wilmington, Delaware. Both of his parents were teachers. His father died when he was just six years old, forcing his mother to teach school at night while working as a receptionist for a doctor during the day. In 1939, Whitten earned his diploma at the age of fifteen from Howard High School. While attending Howard he enjoyed playing tennis, roller-skating, reading and listening to the radio.

Whitten earned his bachelor's of science degree from Pennsylvania State University where he was active in the Industrial Arts Club and became the first African American member of the honor fraternity Iota Lambda Sigma. He was also a member of Omega Psi Phi fraternity, made the Dean's list for six semesters and graduated with honors. After graduation he was drafted into the military and served in the United States Army from 1943 to 1946. He furthered his education at Penn State, earning his master's degree in 1948 and his Ed.D in 1960.

In 1948, he joined the staff of the Baltimore City Schools as an industrial arts teacher. He would spend the next thirty years moving up the ranks of the school system serving as a vice principal, principal and assistant superintendent for vocational education. In 1976, he was a candidate for superintendent of Baltimore City Schools. He retired from the school system in 1979.

After his retirement, Whitten served as director of the Minority Contractors Technical and Assistance Program. In this position he operated a program designed to assist minority contractors to enter and succeed in the construction industry. He served in this post until 1983, when he accepted the position of Baltimore City Urban League President, a job he held until 1988.

In 1987, Whitten received the Parren J. Mitchell Unity Award from the Baltimore NAACP. In 1989, the wing of a Baltimore vocational facility, the Westside Skill Center was dedicated in Dr. Whitten's honor.

Benjamin Whitten passed away on September 21, 2012.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Benjamin Whitten was conducted by Racine Tucker Hamilton on June 2, 2004, in Baltimore, Maryland, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Nonprofit chief executive and high school administrator Benjamin Whitten (1923 - 2012) was the first African American member of Iota Lambda Sigma honor fraternity, and has been a teacher and administrator in Baltimore City Schools for over thirty years. White is also a former president of the Baltimore Urban League.

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:

Whitten, Benjamin, 1923-2012

Hamilton, Racine Tucker (Interviewer)

Lane, Edgar Carey (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Whitten, Benjamin, 1923-2012--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Baltimore City Public Schools

Baltimore Urban League (Md.)

Occupations:

High School Administrator

Nonprofit Chief Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers|EducationMakers

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 Benjamin Whitten, June 2, 2004. 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 Benjamin Whitten, Section A2004_061_001_001, TRT: 0:30:20
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Educator Benjamin Carr Whitten describes his family background and his early years growing up in Wilmington, Delaware. Whitten recalls his mother's personality and explains what it was like growing up without his father, who died when he was six years old. Whitten also describes his schooling, and recalls his favorite recreational activities when he was a child.

Video Oral History Interview with Benjamin Whitten, Section A2004_061_001_002, TRT: 0:31:06
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Educator Benjamin Carr Whitten discusses his college education, and his career as an educator in Baltimore, Maryland. Whitten describes his time at Penn State University, where he received all three of his degrees, including a doctorate in education. Whitten then describes his various positions in the Baltimore city school system, explaining the effects of desegregation and related instances of racial discrimination.

Video Oral History Interview with Benjamin Whitten, Section A2004_061_001_003, TRT: 0:31:13
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Educator Benjamin Carr Whitten discusses his employment with Baltimore City Public Schools. Whitten describes his various positions, including his tenure as principal at two schools. Whitten explains how his leadership skills helped countless schools improve their standing. Whitten also talks about his stint as the president of the Baltimore Urban League, and then reflects on his life and career. Whitten and his wife Lucretia describes a series of photos depicting Whitten's life, family, and career.

Video Oral History Interview with Benjamin Whitten, Section A2004_061_001_004, TRT: 0:03:21
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Educator Benjamin Carr Whitten and his wife Lucretia describe photos depicting Whitten's life, family, and career.