

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ronald T. Gault

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Gault, Ronald T., 1940-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ronald T. Gault,
Dates:	August 22, 2004 and June 17, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2004 and 2006
Physical Description:	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:51:11).
Abstract:	Financial executive Ronald T. Gault (1940 -) served as the CEO of business development and client relations for the J.P. Morgan branch in Johannesburg, South Africa. Gault was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 22, 2004 and June 17, 2006, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_138
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Businessman and consultant Ron Gault was born in Chicago, Illinois, on December 18, 1940. After high school, Gault attended Grinnell College, earning his bachelor's degree in 1962. From there, Gault attended the University of Michigan Graduate School of Public Policy and Management and the Washington University School of Law.

Gault started his professional career working with the Urban League doing voter education and registration, and, in 1964, he joined USAID. The next year, Gault joined the Foreign Service, and though he wished to go to the Francophone Africa program, he instead went to Vientiane, Laos. In 1965, Gault returned, taking a job at the U.S. Justice Department, where he worked under Ramsey Clark and Roger Wilkins in mediation. In 1969, Gault left the Justice Department to go to work with the Ford Foundation, where he remained until 1978. That same year, Gault took a position as a senior advisor to Ed Koch, former mayor of New York City. In 1979, Gault began focusing his energies on busing and employment issues, and, in 1984, he was named the managing director of 1st Boston Corp. In 1994, Gault joined J.P. Morgan, where he headed to Johannesburg, South Africa, to serve as the CEO of business development and client relations for the new branch located there.

Gault is married to Charlayne Hunter-Gault, former CNN bureau chief for South Africa. During their time there, the Gaults were victims of an assault and went unaided by watching policemen. After an international backlash, the officers were reprimanded and the offender jailed. After moving back to the United States, the couple maintained a home in Massachusetts, where they remained active supporters of the arts.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Ronald T. Gault was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 22, 2004 and June 17, 2006, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Financial executive Ronald T.

Gault (1940 -) served as the CEO of business development and client relations for the J.P. Morgan branch in Johannesburg, South Africa.

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:

Gault, Ronald T., 1940-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Gault, Ronald T., 1940---Interviews

African American businesspeople--Interviews

African American executives--Interviews

Investment advisors--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

J.P. Morgan Chase & Co.

Occupations:

Investment Banker

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 Ronald T. Gault, August 22, 2004 and June 17, 2006. 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 Ronald T. Gault, Section A2004_138_001_001, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Ronald T. Gault was born on December 18, 1940 in Chicago, Illinois. His mother, Lillian Adams Gault, was born in Mississippi and migrated to Chicago as a toddler, after her uncle got into a fistfight with a white man, forcing him to send his family north. She attended DuSable High School. Her mother, Naomi Adams, was a domestic worker and outlived several husbands, although she died in her fifties. Gault's father, Charles Gault, was also born in Mississippi and moved to Chicago as a young child. He attended Wendell Phillips High School and was drafted into the U.S. Navy, but did not serve overseas. He worked as a foreman in a tire shop, then in the mid-1950s became a scout for the Chicago White Sox after writing a letter, published in the Chicago Sun-Times, criticizing the team's failure to find local talent. He went on to scout for the Philadelphia Phillies as well. Ronald T. Gault has one brother.

African American businesspeople--Interviews.

African American executives--Interviews.

Investment advisors--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald T. Gault, Section A2004_138_001_002, TRT: 0:28:57 ?

Ronald T. Gault has blue eyes, which is unusual for an African American. His mother was a pragmatist and his father, who was a scout for the Chicago White Sox, was more of a dreamer. Gault remembers one player from Dunbar Vocational High School who his father tried unsuccessfully to recruit. Gault was raised in Chicago, Illinois. He remembers racing Radio Flyer wagons, seeing a man being beaten when he was four years old, the rag man coming to pick up old rags, pushcarts and horse-drawn wagons, and the smell of the nearby stockyards. As a child, his grandmother told him family stories and ghost stories, and he told her stories based on cartoons. He was a voracious reader and was encouraged by a teacher to apply to the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools. He was admitted, but chose to attend DuSable High School, where he contracted polio his freshman year. The polio affected his speech, but his Latin teacher forced him to speak in class and enunciate.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald T. Gault, Section A2004_138_001_003, TRT: 0:30:50 ?

Ronald T. Gault attended DuSable High School in Chicago, Illinois, where he remembers older students bullying the underclassmen. He strove to change that culture when he became an upperclassman and reflects upon how having suffered from polio affected his moral compass. Gault ran for class president as a senior and recalls chiding his peers for laughing at a classmate who made a grammatical error while giving a speech. He also remembers getting into a fistfight with a friend. Gault enrolled at Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa after graduating from high school in 1958. At Grinnell, Gault was one of five black students. One of those students, an athlete, dated a white student and received threats from the local community. Gault and other students made efforts to force a local restaurant to stop discriminating against interracial couples. Later in his career, Gault advocated for his African American colleagues in the U.S. Department of Justice.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald T. Gault, Section A2004_138_001_004, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Ronald T. Gault describes his professors and other African American students at Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa. He dated a white student in college and was a student activist. He and other students attempted to force a local restaurant to serve interracial couples; Gault attended a sit-in conference at All Souls Church in Washington, D.C., for which he reported back to Grinnell's student council; and the Grinnell student council sent money to civil rights organizations. Gault

tried to get involved in the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago, Illinois and was shocked by the violence at a demonstration at Rainbow Beach on Chicago's South Side in 1964. Gault recalls facing discrimination at a Chicago bowling alley; and while trying to get a haircut in a federal building in Washington, D.C. In the latter instance, news of the discrimination reached the press and the barber was forced to give him a haircut.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald T. Gault, Section A2004_138_001_005, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Ronald T. Gault decided to attend the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan for graduate school by flipping a coin. He enrolled in 1962, focused on management policy, and graduated in 1964. In 1964, he was involved in the Chicago Urban League's voter registration campaign, through which he registered black voters and taught them how to split ballots. There, he met Bill Berry, then-chairman of the Chicago Urban League. Gault went on to enroll in the Foreign Service. He entered with the expectation that he would travel overseas, but it became apparent that he would not be sent abroad. In 1965, he was hired by the U.S. Department of Justice where he worked under Roger Wilkins, who served as assistant attorney general for the Community Relations Service. He worked to increase black leadership in Wilkins' office and strategized to find another African American to succeed him. He talks about Wilkins' successor, Benjamin F. Holman, who wrote a controversial expose of black Muslims in Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald T. Gault, Section A2004_138_001_006, TRT: 0:28:50 ?

Ronald T. Gault approached HistoryMaker The Honorable Senator Edward Brooke about naming the next Assistant Attorney General. After the top candidates did not work out, Benjamin F. Holman was appointed to the position. Following Holman's appointment, Gault left the U.S. Department of Justice in 1969. With help from the previous Assistant Attorney General, Roger Wilkins, Gault interviewed and was hired at the Ford Foundation. He worked as a program officer in the national affairs division. In 1971, he was sent to East and West Africa to study how newly decolonized countries handled their transitions. He took a Kenyan model for nationalizing businesses and used it to keep a supermarket from leaving Chicago's Woodlawn neighborhood by partnering with The Woodlawn Organization (TWO). Gault remembers an instance of fraud by a Ford Foundation employee. In 1978, after nine and a half years, Gault left the Ford Foundation and was persuaded to join Edward Koch's New York City mayoral administration as an advisor.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald T. Gault, Section A2004_138_002_007, TRT: 0:29:32 ?

Ronald T. Gault began working for New York mayor Edward Koch in 1978, as a senior advisor, although he would have preferred an operational position. Within eight months, he was promoted to head of all training, employment, and business development in the city. One of his achievement in that role was successfully working with the City of New York Department of Sanitation and David Rockefeller to create a jobs program to clean up the city. Gault remembers Koch's strained relationship with African American New Yorkers and his opinions on affirmative action. In 1984, Gault left Koch's administration and was offered a job with First Boston Corporation, thus beginning his investment banking career. He left in 1993, and joined J.P. Morgan as a managing director, leading a group that focused on financings for government entities and corporations. He primarily worked in northern U.S. cities before relocating with his wife, HistoryMaker Charlayne Hunter-Gault, to South Africa.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald T. Gault, Section A2004_138_002_008, TRT: 0:24:02 ?

Ronald T. Gault and his wife, HistoryMaker Charlayne Hunter-Gault, moved to

South Africa in 1996, where he was responsible for opening a bank for J.P. Morgan. The bank had a major impact in the mining and energy sector along with financing businesses and corporations in the country. Gault describes a sense of optimism and opportunity in the post-apartheid country. In 2000, Gault and his wife were assaulted by two white policemen and another white South African, none of whom were convicted. Gault describes the details of the trial and the judge and prosecutor's lenience towards the assailants. Gault was retired at the time of the interview. During retirement, he began to focus on a number of ventures, including a wine export business. He talks about developments in South Africa, his hopes and concerns for the African American community and his family. Gault reflects upon his life, legacy and how he would like to be remembered.