

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Phillip Jackson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Jackson, Phillip, 1950-2018
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Phillip Jackson,
Dates:	August 24, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:21:01).
Abstract:	Nonprofit chief executive Phillip Jackson (1950 - 2018) founded the Black Star Project, an organization designed to help young students achieve all of their educational potential, and to get parents and educators more involved in students' lives. Jackson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 24, 2004, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_141
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Phillip Jackson was born in Chicago, Illinois, on September 22, 1950. After graduating from DuSable High School, Jackson attended Roosevelt University, where he earned his bachelor's degree in philosophy in 1974. From there, Jackson attended National Louis University, earning a certificate in education.

Following his graduation, Jackson went to work for Chicago publishers Kroch's and Bretano's; he remained there until 1997, serving as senior vice president of the organization. During his time at Kroch's and Bretano's, Jackson began his involvement in the greater Chicago community. In 1994, Jackson joined the Chicago Office of Management and Budget, where he was in charge of human services working under Paul Vallas. The next year, Gerry Chico and Mayor Richard M. Daley brought Jackson on board with the Chicago Public Schools, where he was the director of intergovernmental affairs. In 1999, Jackson became the CEO of the Chicago Housing Authority. During his career, Jackson has also served as CEO of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Chicago and the chief of education for the Chicago Public Schools.

Jackson managed the Black Star Project, which he also founded. The Black Star Project is an organization designed to help young students achieve all of their educational potential, and to get parents and educators more involved in their students' lives. Eventually Jackson's involvement in local politics and strong support from the community led to his seeking statewide office; in 2008 he ran for the position of State Representative of the 26th District of Illinois, but was defeated.

Jackson has received numerous awards, including the Chicago Cares Power of One Leadership Award, and the 2003-2004 Illinois Fatherhood Initiative's Father of the Year.

Jackson passed away on November 4, 2018.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Phillip Jackson was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 24, 2004, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Nonprofit chief executive Phillip Jackson (1950 - 2018) founded the Black Star Project, an organization designed to help young students achieve all of their educational potential, and to get parents and educators more involved in students' lives.

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:

Jackson, Phillip, 1950-2018

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Jackson, Phillip, 1950-2018--Interviews

African American civic leaders--Interviews

Youth workers--Interviews

African American politicians--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Nonprofit Chief Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Phillip Jackson, August 24, 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 Phillip Jackson, Section A2004_141_001_001, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Phillip Jackson was born on September 22, 1950 in Chicago, Illinois. His mother was born in the 1930s in Chicago and was a talented pianist. However, she was mentally ill and was hospitalized most of Jackson's life. Jackson was raised on the South Side of Chicago by his maternal grandparents who were from Leesburg, Georgia and whose last name came from the Freeney plantation in Georgia. He recalls his grandfather's stories about driving a hack in Macon, Georgia and his grandmother's stories about her grandmother's home remedies. Jackson's grandfather left Georgia to escape the Ku Klux Klan in 1926. After moving to Detroit, Michigan, he settled in Chicago and sent for his family. Jackson's father, Stewart Dine Jackson, was born in LaGrange, Illinois. Jackson's paternal grandparents migrated to LaGrange from Fruitland, Maryland. Jackson talks about The Great Migration to contextualize his family's history. Jackson's paternal uncle is John H. Jackson, III who was known as the Button Man or Mr. Right in Chicago.

African American civic leaders--Interviews.

Youth workers--Interviews.

African American politicians--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Phillip Jackson, Section A2004_141_001_002, TRT: 0:30:15 ?

Phillip Jackson's parents met in the Altgeld Garden Homes in Chicago, Illinois. Days after Jackson was born, his family moved to 43rd Street and Wentworth Avenue, which is where he was raised by his maternal grandparents who owned a store in the neighborhood. His maternal grandfather, who only had a second grade education, taught Jackson the value of hard work. Jackson recalls the sight of broken glass in his childhood neighborhoods. He attended Hendricks Elementary School where he was a poor student and repeated the second grade. In fifth grade, he went to live with his father and stepmother and attended Charles Kozminski Elementary School. Living in a more structured household allowed him to excel in school. When he was eleven years old, Jackson's family moved into the Robert Taylor Homes. He describes the concentrated poverty in public housing and explains how government mismanagement and welfare policies precipitated the destruction of the community and development of a project mentality.

Video Oral History Interview with Phillip Jackson, Section A2004_141_001_003, TRT: 0:25:45 ?

Phillip Jackson was raised by his maternal grandparents until the age of ten when he and his sisters went to live with his father. When he was eleven years old, his family moved into the Robert Taylor Homes in Chicago, Illinois where he attended John Farren Elementary School, a make-shift school constructed in the public housing complex, and DuSable Upper Grade Center. Jackson was placed in advanced classes, which led to being beaten up frequently while at DuSable Upper Grade Center. Although he was never recruited to join a gang, he recalls the rise of gang culture and the violence of youth due to lack of recreation facilities or social services at Robert Taylor. Jackson graduated elementary school at the top of his class and entered DuSable High School in 1965, but early in the semester transferred to Hirsch Metropolitan High School to escape bullying. Jackson's family eventually moved to the Auburn Gresham neighborhood, part of the pattern of African American families moving further southwest in the city.

Video Oral History Interview with Phillip Jackson, Section A2004_141_001_004, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

Phillip Jackson attended various churches during his childhood. During high school, he had a job that distracted him from his academics and tried to emulate the popular Ivy Leaguers style. Following graduation from Hirsch Metropolitan High School in Chicago, Illinois, Jackson enrolled at the University of Illinois at

Chicago to avoid the draft. He was unprepared for the level of academic rigor and dropped out of college. He decided to return to school once he realized what his life would be like without a college degree. Jackson enrolled at Malcolm X College and Olive-Harvey College, where he took the hardest classes, then he earned a scholarship to Roosevelt University, which he graduated from in 1974 with a degree in philosophy. While at Roosevelt he began to develop his brand of excellence, inspired by the high standards of one of his philosophy professors. He also took graduate courses in education at National Louis University. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Jackson was a party promoter in Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with Phillip Jackson, Section A2004_141_001_005, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Phillip Jackson began working in the stockroom at the bookstore Kroch's and Brentano's in 1969. After he graduated from Roosevelt University in Chicago, Illinois in 1974, the vice president of paperback buying encouraged Jackson to pursue a career at Kroch's and Brentano's. Jackson worked there for twenty-three years and rose to be senior vice president of operations. He served on the Lay Board of Trustees of Hales Franciscan High School and in 1991, he developed a plan to keep the school open. In 1993, his career at Kroch's and Brentano's ended when he filed a class action lawsuit against the company on behalf of employees being denied pensions. The lawsuit was eventually settled. In 1994, he was hired as a budget analyst in City of Chicago Office of Budget and Management by Paul Vallas. Despite his lack of political connections, Jackson impressed Vallas, Gery Chico and Mayor Richard M. Daley with his efficiency and efficacy. Jackson believes that Marcus Garvey is the most dynamic black leader in history.

Video Oral History Interview with Phillip Jackson, Section A2004_141_001_006, TRT: 0:31:11 ?

Phillip Jackson was appointed director of intergovernmental affairs in 1995 by Chicago, Illinois Mayor Richard M. Daley as a part of the mayoral takeover of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). He was then appointed chief of staff for CPS by CEO Paul Vallas. In 1999, Jackson was appointed CEO of the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA). As CEO, he helped implement The Plan for Transformation, which sought to move people out of CHA high-rises by using Section Eight vouchers and providing support services to help people adapt to living in mainstream, mixed-income communities. He left the agency in 2000 and served as the Chief for Education for Mayor Daley. He then became CEO of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Chicago. In 2002, Jackson decided to devote himself full-time to the organization he founded in 1996, The Black Star Project, which is patterned after the teachings of Marcus Garvey. The project's philosophy is to transform the value system around education in African American families to improve student achievement.

Video Oral History Interview with Phillip Jackson, Section A2004_141_001_007, TRT: 0:25:40 ?

Phillip Jackson founded The Black Star Project in 1996 and began serving as the executive director full-time in 2002. The organization emphasizes building a structure of parental involvement as a key to educational achievement. Jackson believes in reaching out and supporting parents and guardians where they are, even in situations where a parent is incarcerated. He reflects upon the positive impact a structured environment had on his academic achievement. Although The Black Star Project has a small staff, due to the Internet, it has members across the country and is able to disperse its message broadly. The organization has received funding from Commonwealth Edison and Toyota Motor Corporation and has made strides in developing successful programs. However, Jackson's goal is to transform the culture of the African American community and build an organization that is self-sustaining. He believes both these goals

will take decades to accomplish.