

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Trymaine Lee

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Lee, Trymaine, 1978-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Trymaine Lee,
Dates:	February 20, 2014
Bulk Dates:	2014
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:06:55).
Abstract:	Journalist Trymaine Lee (1978 -) served as a national correspondent for MSNBC. He received the Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News in 2006 for his coverage of Hurricane Katrina. Lee was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 20, 2014, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2014_076
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Journalist Trymaine Lee was born on September 20, 1978. He was raised in Chesilhurst, New Jersey, and graduated from Milton S. Hershey School in Hershey, Pennsylvania. Lee briefly attended Shippensburg University in Pennsylvania before transferring to Camden County College in Blackwood, New Jersey, where he received his A.A. degree in communications in 2000. Lee went on to attend Rowan University, where he was a staff writer for the school's newspaper, *The Whit*. In 2003, he graduated from Rowan University with his B.A. degree in journalism/communications.

Upon graduation, Lee was hired as an intern for the *Philadelphia Daily News*. He went on to work as a police and crime reporter at the *Philadelphia Tribune* and Trenton, New Jersey's *The Trentonian*. In 2005, Lee was hired as a reporter for *The Times-Picayune* in New Orleans, Louisiana, where he covered Hurricane Katrina and was awarded the 2006 Pulitzer Prize for breaking news reporting for his coverage of the storm's aftermath. From 2006 to 2010, Lee served as a staff reporter at *The New York Times*, where he covered the Harlem beat for the paper's metro desk and contributed to *The New York Times'* Pulitzer Prize-winning coverage of the Eliot Spitzer prostitution scandal. From 2011 to 2012, Lee worked as a senior reporter for *The Huffington Post* and was one of the first national reporters to cover the Trayvon Martin shooting in 2012. That same year, he was hired as a national reporter for MSNBC, where he reports on social justice issues and the impact of politics and policy on everyday people.

In addition to winning a Pulitzer Prize, Lee was named the National Association of Black Journalists' 2006 Emerging Journalist of the Year. He also received Rowan University's Alumnus of Distinction Award in 2006 and Camden County College's Outstanding Alumni Award in 2010. In 2011, the New York chapter of the NABJ honored Lee with the Griot Award for Overall Excellence, and, in 2012, he received the April Sidney Award from the Sidney Hillman Foundation.

Trymaine Lee was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 20, 2014.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Trymaine Lee was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on February 20, 2014, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Journalist Trymaine Lee (1978 -) served as a national correspondent for MSNBC. He received the Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News in 2006 for his coverage of Hurricane Katrina.

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:

Lee, Trymaine, 1978-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Lee, Trymaine, 1978---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Journalist

HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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 Trymaine Lee, February 20, 2014. 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 Trymaine Lee, Section A2014_076_001_001, TRT: 1:28:06 ?

Trymaine Lee was born on September 20, 1978 in Stratford, New Jersey to Wanda Worthington Taylor and Kenny Watkins. His mother was the youngest of eight children born to Horace Worthington and Ida Worthington Dyitt in West Berlin, New Jersey. His grandfather worked at a lumberyard, and owned an apartment building in Camden, New Jersey with his wife. He was killed by one of their tenants over a rent disagreement. Lee's father was not present in his life.

Instead, Lee and his older half siblings, Oliver Lee and Erica Lee, were raised by their mother and stepfather, George Taylor, in an integrated, working class community in Chesilhurst, New Jersey. There, Lee enjoyed playing sports and games with the neighborhood children. He also attended church services with his maternal grandmother. His mother worked multiple jobs, including at the movie theater and welfare department. At this point in the interview, Lee talks about his stepfather's struggle with addiction.

Video Oral History Interview with Trymaine Lee, Section A2014_076_001_002, TRT: 2:30:27 ?

Trymaine Lee was raised by his mother and stepfather, Wanda Worthington Taylor and George Taylor, in the working class community of Chesilhurst, New Jersey. Many of his maternal aunts and uncles lived nearby in Berlin, New Jersey. Lee began his education at Chesilhurst Elementary School. A precocious student, he was selected for the gifted and talented program, and often challenged his teachers and other authority figures. In 1990, Lee enrolled at Edgewood Regional High School in Atco, New Jersey. He attended for a few months, until he was admitted to the Milton Hershey School, a boarding school for low-income students in Hershey, Pennsylvania. There, he was exposed to new activities, like horseback riding and canoeing. At this point in the interview, Lee remembers his interactions with the dormitories' adult supervisors, some of whom made racist comments about the students of color. He also reflects upon his decision to leave Chesilhurst, and remembers losing touch with his childhood friends.

Video Oral History Interview with Trymaine Lee, Section A2014_076_001_003, TRT: 3:28:34 ?

Trymaine Lee attended the Milton Hershey School, a boarding school in Hershey, Pennsylvania, from the sixth grade until his high school graduation. He performed well academically, and played on the school's football and basketball teams. In his later years of high school, Lee took an advanced communications class, where he learned about photography and video production. He also joined the yearbook staff. At this point in the interview, Lee describes the school's social culture, and remembers his early experiences of dating. He talks about the influence of hip hop culture on his personal style and mannerisms. He also remembers his close friendship with classmate Latoya Lawton, who drowned during their senior year. Upon graduating, Lee was recruited to play football at Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania. He left the school after one year, when he learned that his ex-girlfriend was pregnant. After discovering that he was not the child's father, Lee enrolled at Camden County College in Blackwood, New Jersey.

Video Oral History Interview with Trymaine Lee, Section A2014_076_001_004, TRT: 4:33:46 ?

Trymaine Lee obtained an associate's degree from Camden County College in Blackwood, New Jersey in 2000. He went on to study journalism under Kathryn Quigley and Julia MacDonnell Chang at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey. There, Lee developed a newspaper column that profiled faculty members and guest speakers. During the summers, he worked at Circus Time Amusements, a party rental company based in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. Upon graduating, he interned at the city desk of the Philadelphia Daily News in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he was mentored by editor Michael I. Days. Next, Lee worked as a journalist at The Philadelphia Tribune under publisher Robert Bogle, and then joined the staff of The Trentonian in Trenton, New Jersey. In 2005, Lee was hired by the Times Picayune in New Orleans, Louisiana. There, his team earned the Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Reporting for their coverage of Hurricane Katrina in 2006.

Video Oral History Interview with Trymaine Lee, Section A2014_076_001_005, TRT: 5:31:08 ?

Trymaine Lee was a police reporter at the Times Picayune in New Orleans, Louisiana in 2006, when his team won the Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Reporting for their coverage of Hurricane Katrina. Around this time, Lee met his wife, Gabrielle Maple Lee, through the National Association of Black Journalists. He was also introduced to The New York Times executive editor Jill Abramson, who hired him as a reporter on the paper's metro desk. There, Lee covered several beats, including the New York State Assembly in Albany and the Harlem community in New York City. He worked alongside journalists like John Eligon and Jonathan P. Hicks. After four years at The New York Times, Lee joined the staff of The Huffington Post. He wrote for the Black Voices section, and broke the story of Trayvon Martin's death to mainstream news outlets in 2012. At this point in the interview, Lee talks about the significance of digital technology for print journalism, and the lack of black journalists at mainstream news organizations.

Video Oral History Interview with Trymaine Lee, Section A2014_076_001_006, TRT: 6:34:54 ?

Trymaine Lee served as a national reporter for the Black Voices section of The Huffington Post from 2011 to 2012. That year, Lee joined MSNBC, where he became a national reporter under executive director Richard Wolffe. He went on to publish digital content on MSNBC.com, and appeared on news programs like the 'Melissa Harris-Perry' show. Lee reflects upon changes in the news industry, including the impact of digital technology and social media on print journalism. He also talks about the future of African American news organizations like The Root and TheGrio. He describes his plans for the future, and reflects upon his personal legacy and that of his generation. Lee concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.