

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Ras Baraka

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Baraka, Ras
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Ras Baraka,
Dates:	December 4, 2017
Bulk Dates:	2017
Physical Description:	2 uncompressed MOV digital video files (1:00:03).
Abstract:	Mayor The Honorable Ras Baraka (1969 -) was elected mayor of Newark, New Jersey in 2014. Baraka was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 4, 2017, in Newark, New Jersey. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2017_213
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Political leader Ras Baraka was born on April 9, 1969 in Newark, New Jersey to writer and playwright Amiri Baraka and poet Amina Baraka. He received his B.A. degree in political science from Howard University in 1991; and earned his M.A. degree in education supervision from St. Peter's University in Jersey City in 1994. In 1992, Baraka served as the editor of *In the Tradition: An Anthology of Young Black Writers*. In 1998, Baraka was featured on singer Lauryn Hill's album *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* and in 2003, he performed a collection of poems called *Black Girls Learn Love Hard* at the Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival. The volume was dedicated to Baraka's sister, Shani Baraka, who was murdered in 2003. Baraka has participated in the National Political Hip-Hop Convention from its inception in 2004.

Prior to his political career, Baraka worked as an English and history teacher for Newark Public Schools. In 1994, at the age of twenty-four, Baraka ran for mayor of Newark, New Jersey, but was defeated by Sharpe James. Baraka was elected as Council Member At-Large on the Municipal Council of Newark in 2005. From 2007 to 2013, Baraka served as the principal of Central High School in Newark. He was re-elected as a South Ward Council Member in 2010, a position he held until 2014. In July of 2014, Baraka became Newark's 40th mayor, on a platform of improving the city's public school system, economic growth, and criminal justice reform. During his tenure, Baraka launched the City's first police Civilian Complaint Review board and unified the City's police and fire departments into a single public safety department. In 2017, Baraka initiated the Hire. Buy. Live. Newark plan to stimulate the city's economic development. Baraka was re-elected for a second mayoral term in 2018.

In 2015, Baraka was named Most Valuable Mayor on The Nation's Most Valuable Progressives list. He was also featured on Ebony magazine's Power 100 list. In 2017, Baraka was presented with an honorary degree from Montclair University. He also served on the board of trustees of Newark Trust.

Ras Baraka was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on December 4, 2017.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Ras Baraka was conducted by Harriette Cole on December 4, 2017, in Newark, New Jersey, and was recorded on 2 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Mayor The Honorable Ras Baraka (1969 -) was elected mayor of Newark, New Jersey in 2014.

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:

Baraka, Ras

Cole, Harriette (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Baraka, Ras--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Mayor

HistoryMakers® Category:

PoliticalMakers

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 The Honorable Ras Baraka, December 4, 2017. 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 The Honorable Ras Baraka, Section A2017_213_001_001, TRT: 1:28:59 ?

The Honorable Ras Baraka was born on April 9, 1969 in Newark, New Jersey to Amina Baraka and Amiri Baraka. His maternal grandmother, Ruth Guest Richardson, worked in a textile factory, while his grandfather, James Robinson, was a truck driver. Baraka's mother was born in the Carolinas, and grew up in Newark, where she attended Arts High School. Baraka's paternal grandparents, Anna Lois Russ Jones and Coyt Jones, also originated in the Carolinas, and eventually settled in Newark, where Baraka's father was born. He went on to graduate from Howard University, and served in the U.S. Air Force from 1954

to 1957. In 1965, he changed his name from LeRoi Jones to Amiri Baraka, and founded the Black Arts Repertory Theatre in Harlem. The following year, he met his wife, who later took the name Amina Baraka. Baraka grew up in Newark, where he attended the African Free School and the Newark Public Schools. He later enrolled at Howard University, where he was mentored by Professor Ronald Walters.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Ras Baraka, Section A2017_213_001_002, TRT: 2:31:04 ?

The Honorable Ras Baraka attended Howard University from 1986 to 1991. He served as vice president of the Howard University Student Association and founded Black Nia F.O.R.C.E. (Freedom Organization for Racial and Cultural Enlightenment). Baraka also helped organize the protest that successfully removed Republican strategist Harvey LeRoy Atwater from the university's board of trustees. In the year after his graduation, Baraka edited 'In the Tradition: An Anthology of Young Black Writers' with Kevin Powell. He then enrolled in a graduate program at Saint Peter's University in Jersey City, New Jersey. After completing his master's degree in education, he began teaching in the Newark Public Schools. He also wrote freelance pieces for The Source magazine. In 1994, Baraka mounted his first campaign for the mayoralty of Newark at twenty-four years old. He lost the election to the incumbent Mayor William Payne but continued to participate in community politics. He was elected councilman at large in 2004.