

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ronald S. Coleman

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Coleman, Ronald S.
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ronald S. Coleman,
<b>Dates:</b>	February 16, 2013
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2013
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Uncompressed MOV video files (3:26:17).
<b>Abstract:</b>	U.S. marine corps lieutenant general Ronald S. Coleman (1948 - ) advanced in rank to Lieutenant General on October 27, 2006 and became the second African American in the Marine Corps to reach the 3-star rank. Coleman was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 16, 2013, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2013_050
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Ronald S. Coleman was born in 1950. Following his graduation from Cheyney State University in 1973, Coleman was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in December 1974. Coleman graduated from the USMC Basic School in 1975, the Marine Corps Command and Staff College in 1987, and the Marine Corps Amphibious Warfare School in 1982, and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces in 1995.

Coleman enlisted in the U.S. Navy in April 1968, but was discharged upon his return from Danang in the Republic of Vietnam in June 1970. In 1982, Coleman was then transferred to Marine Corps headquarters in the Officer Assignment Branch and served as administrative assistant to the director of the Personnel Management Division. Coleman was assigned as an instructor at the Amphibious Warfare School for one year. In June 1991, Coleman reported to the Marine Corps headquarters and served as the logistics project officer in the installations and logistics branch. In 1996, he reported to the Pentagon where he served in the Logistics Directorate as the deputy division chief in the Logistic Readiness Center. In April 1999, he deployed to the Balkan Region and served with Joint Task Force Shining Hope. Coleman was deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom as commanding general of the Marine Air and Ground Task Force in June 2003. He deployed again in 2004 as the commanding general of the Combined Joint Task Force Haiti in support of Operation Secure Democracy.

On September 29, 2006, Coleman was assigned as the deputy commandant for manpower and reserve affairs and appointed to the rank of Lieutenant General. His military honors include Navy Sea Service Deployment Ribbon with five service stars, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, and the Gold Medal of French Defense. Coleman also wears the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Identification Badge and the Office of the Secretary of Defense Identification Badge

Lt. Gen Ronald S. Coleman was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on February 16, 2013.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Ronald S. Coleman was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 16, 2013, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 7 Uncompressed MOV video files. U.S. marine corps lieutenant general Ronald S. Coleman (1948 - ) advanced in rank to Lieutenant General on October 27, 2006 and became the second African American in the Marine Corps to reach the 3-star rank.

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## 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Coleman, Ronald S.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Coleman, Ronald S.--Interviews

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United States--Armed Forces--African American Officers--Interviews.

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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United States. Marine Corps

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

MilitaryMakers

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## 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 S. Coleman, February 16, 2013. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 11/16/2013 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage, February 16, 2013

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald S. Coleman, Section A2013\_050\_001\_001, TRT:  
1:30:24 2013/02/16

Ronald S. Coleman describes his family background. His parents, Barbara Gretchen Hill Coleman and Charles Frederick Coleman, were born in 1923 and 1924, respectively. His mother grew up in Delaware and was a domestic worker, while his father grew up in Darby, Pennsylvania and was a steel worker. Coleman's maternal grandparents were, May E. Hill and Harold Hill,

but their nicknames were “Nana” and “Uncle Harry”. Coleman can trace his father’s family all the way back to his great-grandmother, Nellie Standford, who lived to be 113 years old. Her husband's brother served in the Civil War. Coleman talks about how his parents met and the tension between their two families. He describes his parents’ personalities and his relationship with his father. Coleman also talks about his seven siblings, which consisted of three brothers and four sisters.

African American families.

African American mothers--Delaware.

African American fathers--Pennsylvania.

African American grandparents.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald S. Coleman, Section A2013\_050\_001\_002, TRT: 2:28:49 2013/02/16

Ronald S. Coleman talks about his family living at his maternal grandmother’s house Darby Township, Pennsylvania when he was young. He talks about his family’s success despite their hardships and his maternal grandmother’s positive influence on them. He explains that during his childhood, his father was an alcoholic and would physically abuse his mother. Coleman describes his relationship with his maternal grandmother and compares it with his paternal grandparents, whom he did not see as much. Coleman describes growing up in Darby and discusses the importance of sports in his young life. He talks about his primary and secondary education; his favorite school teachers and his favorite subjects in school, which were history and reading.

African American families.

African American grandmothers.

Alcoholics--Family violence.

Childhood--Pennsylvania.

Education--Pennsylvania.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald S. Coleman, Section A2013\_050\_001\_003, TRT: 3:28:28 2013/02/16

Ronald S. Coleman talks about junior high school, playing little league baseball and his summer jobs. Coleman attended Darby-Colwyn Senior High School where he played, football, basketball, and baseball. He remembers his high school football and basketball coaches, Mr. House and Mr. Swan. Coleman was also a student council senator at his high school, although he performed poorly academically. Coleman graduated from high school in 1966 and went on to attend Northeastern University. However, after becoming dissatisfied with his studies, he instead decided to join the U.S. Navy Reserve.

Education, Secondary--Pennsylvania.

High school athletes.

Northeastern University (Boston, Mass.)

United States. Navy.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald S. Coleman, Section A2013\_050\_001\_004, TRT: 4:30:49 2013/02/16

Ronald S. Coleman talks about his basic training in the U.S. Navy and the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He discusses his tour of duty in Vietnam and the harsh public criticism of the Vietnam War. He returned to the U.S. in 1970 and talks about the black community’s response to Vietnam veterans. He also talks about his initial reluctance to remain in the service after

returning from Vietnam. However, following his graduation from Cheyney State University in 1973 and a brief career in teaching, Coleman enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. Coleman talks about his experience in the U.S. Marine Corps' Officers Candidate School and describes the physical and mental challenges he endured during the school's 12-week training program.

United States. Navy.

King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968--Assassination.

Vietnam War, 1961-1975.

Cheyney University of Pennsylvania.

United States. Marine Corps.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald S. Coleman, Section A2013\_050\_001\_005, TRT: 5:28:52 2013/02/16

Ronald S. Coleman talks about the most difficult part of the U.S. Marine Corps' Officer Candidate School. In addition, he talks about the historically racist treatment of blacks in the military, his first assignment at Camp Lejeune as a second lieutenant, and his completion of Officer Candidate School. Coleman attended the Amphibious Warfare School from 1981 to 1982 and then began working for the Officer Assignment Branch at U.S. Marine Corps headquarters in Virginia--where he also served as an administrative assistant to the director of the Personnel Management Division. Coleman talks about the bombing of the U.S. Marine Corps headquarters in Beirut and the invasion of Grenada. In 1987, he graduated from the Marine Corps Command and Staff College. Afterwards, he was assigned to the operating forces in Okinawa, Japan. He also did a tour of duty in the Philippines, where his unit aided in the Gulf War effort.

United States. Marine Corps.

United States Armed Forces--African Americans.

Bombings--Lebanon--Beirut.

Grenada--History--American Invasion, 1983.

Okinawa Island (Japan)

Persian Gulf War, 1991.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald S. Coleman, Section A2013\_050\_001\_006, TRT: 6:29:22 2013/02/16

Ronald S. Coleman talks about his unit's role in the Gulf War, his promotion to lieutenant colonel and his assignment to Camp Lejeune in 1993 as commanding officer of maintenance battalion. The following year, he was re-assigned as a group deputy operations officer. Coleman talks about his attendance at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces in 1995. In 1996, he reported to the Pentagon where he served as the deputy division chief in the Logistic Readiness Center. Three years later, Coleman was deployed to the Balkan Region and served with Joint Task Force Shining Hope to assist refugees in Albania. Coleman discusses his promotion to brigadier general in 1997 and the death of his parents. His wife was diagnosed with colon cancer at the same time his mother was in the hospital. Coleman also discusses the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks at the Pentagon and his deployment to Kuwait to support the Iraqi War.

Persian Gulf War, 1991.

Camp Lejeune (N.C.)

Industrial College of the Armed Forces (U.S.)

Yugoslav War, 1991-1995.

Iraq War, 2003-2011.

Death of parents.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald S. Coleman, Section A2013\_050\_001\_007, TRT:  
7:29:33 2013/02/16

Ronald S. Coleman details his deployment in 2004 as the commanding general of the Combined Joint Task Force Haiti--in support of Operation Secure Democracy. In 2006, he receives his second and third stars; making him the second black three-star general in the history of the U.S. Marine Corps. Coleman discusses his rise to lieutenant general and the publicity he received following his promotion. He talks about his assignment as deputy commandant of Manpower and Reserve Affairs in 2007 and recounts the groups' plan to grow the U.S. Marine Corps' ranks. Coleman talks about his retirement from the U.S. Marine Corps in 2009, as well as his wife and four adult daughters. Coleman reflects on his legacy and shares his regrets. He also describes his hopes and concerns for the African-American community and how he would like to be remembered.

Unified operations (Military science)

African American generals.

United States. Marine Corps.

Reminiscing.