

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dempsey J. Travis

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Travis, Dempsey J.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dempsey J. Travis,
Dates:	January 11, 2000
Bulk Dates:	2000
Physical Description:	3 Betacam SP videocassettes (1:08:03).
Abstract:	Real estate entrepreneur and historian Dempsey J. Travis (1920 - 2009) had a long business career as the founder of United Mortgage Bankers of America, as well as the Dempsey Travis Securities and Investment Corporation. Travis was also known for his longtime commitment to the arts, and was the founder of the Urban Research Press. Travis was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 11, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2000_022
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Dempsey Jerome Travis was born on February 25, 1920, in Chicago, Illinois. Travis attended Roosevelt University, where he received his bachelor's degree in 1949. That same year, he founded Travis Realty Corporation and became its president. In addition to his responsibilities at Travis Realty, Travis also served as president of Sivart Mortgage Company. At the helm of these two companies, Travis was able to establish himself firmly in the real estate development of Chicago's South Side throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. In 1960, Travis founded United Mortgage Bankers of America, as well as the Dempsey Travis Securities and Investment Corporation, which he served as president until 1974. Also in the 1960s, Travis returned to school and received an advanced degree from the School of Mortgage Banking at Northwestern University in 1969.

As passionate about the arts as about his entrepreneurial career, Travis founded the Urban Research Press in 1969 as a forum for the publication of African American literature and nonfiction. To date, Urban Research Press has published seven best-selling nonfiction books by Travis, as well as those of several other authors. Each of these works analyzes a specific aspect of the African American experience. A few of Travis' major topics include the role of jazz culture in postwar society and the participation of African Americans in state and federal politics. Some of his many titles include, *The Victory Monument*, *I Refuse to Learn to Fail*, *Views from the Back of the Bus* and *An Autobiography of Black Jazz*, which won the Art Deco Award in 1985. As a literary figure, Travis

served as president of the Society of Midland Authors from 1988 to 1990, financial editor for Dollars and Sense for several years, and as a contributing writer for Ebony and The Black Scholar.

As a participant in the Civil Rights Movement, Travis was firmly committed to the reform of social injustice. He was a coordinator of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 1960 March on Chicago, one of the first civil rights marches in the nation. Travis was also the president of the NAACP Chicago Chapter from 1959 to 1960 and participated in several presidential administrations including President Lyndon Johnson's 1966 Civil Rights Meetings, President Richard Nixon's Housing Task Force and President Gerald Ford's Presidential Task Force on Urban Renewal.

Travis' awards and recognitions are an accurate reflection of his accomplishments within business, politics and the arts. He is listed in Who's Who in America, Who's Who in Finance and Industry, and Who's Who in the World. He was also listed among the "People Who Have Made a Difference" by the Chicago Sun-Times and was one of Ebony magazine's "100 Most Influential Black Americans." Travis was also the subject of numerous television programs: five of these shows have received Emmy nominations. Perhaps his greatest honor, however, was receiving Black Enterprise magazine's "First Annual Finance Achievement Award" on February 21, 1975 by Vice President Nelson Rockefeller at the White House.

Travis passed away on July 2, 2009 at the age of 89.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dempsey J. Travis was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on January 11, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 3 Betacam SP videocassettes. Real estate entrepreneur and historian Dempsey J. Travis (1920 - 2009) had a long business career as the founder of United Mortgage Bankers of America, as well as the Dempsey Travis Securities and Investment Corporation. Travis was also known for his longtime commitment to the arts, and was the founder of the Urban Research Press.

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:

Travis, Dempsey, 1920-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

(Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Travis, Dempsey, 1920---Interviews

African American businesspeople--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

African American real estate agents--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

African American historians--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Travis Realty Corporation

HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

EducationMakers

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 Dempsey J. Travis, January 11, 2000.
The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 2/15/2016 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, January 11, 2000

Video Oral History Interview with Dempsey J. Travis, Section A2000_022_001_001,
TRT: 0:29:45 2000/01/11

Dempsey Travis talks about growing up in the Bronzeville neighborhood of Chicago and about his early experience as an entrepreneur. He then reflects on his personality and the ways he kept himself entertained as an only child. Travis then talks about when he first saw Duke Ellington perform and how the trips he took as a child with his mother influenced his interest in the arts. Dempsey Travis talks about his father's personality and details how his parents and family moved from the South to Chicago to find work. Travis then talks about the racial boundaries in his neighborhood and recalls his first encounter with race discrimination. Lastly, Travis talks about the Chicago Renaissance, which ran concurrently with New York's Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s. He details the cultural activities that occurred but laments the lack of an historical account of that period.

Bronzeville (Chicago, Ill.).

Childhood and youth--Illinois--Chicago.

African American mothers.

African American fathers.

African American arts--Illinois--Chicago--20th century.

Chicago (Ill.)--Intellectual life--20th century.

Video Oral History Interview with Dempsey J. Travis, Section A2000_022_001_002,
TRT: 0:28:18 2000/01/11

Dempsey Travis continues to talk about the Chicago Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s and details the prominent black-owned businesses of the day. Travis then talks about his music group and recalls how his ability to promote himself successfully earned him music gigs. He then talks about how he gave up a career as a professional musician to pursue a career in real estate and then details his first official sale in 1949. Lastly, Travis talks about his leadership activities in the local NAACP chapter, and his real estate activities during the 1960s and 1970s.

African American arts--Illinois--Chicago--20th century.

African American business enterprises--Illinois--Chicago.

Music--Performance--Illinois--Chicago.

Real estate business--Illinois--Chicago.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Video Oral History Interview with Dempsey J. Travis, Section A2000_022_001_003,
TRT: 0:10:00 2000/01/11

Dempsey Travis talks about the importance of the Civil Rights Movement and recalls an encounter with racial discrimination while traveling in Tennessee with his wife. Travis then reflects on his hopes for the black community; however, he speaks about the self-destructive path it is taking. Lastly, he talks about the importance of having blacks in the business community and the personal accomplishments he's most proud of.

Civil rights movements--United States.

Racism--Tennessee.

African american business enterprises.

African Americans--Social conditions.

Video Oral History Interview with Dempsey J. Travis, Section
A2000_022_TRAVIS_DEMPSEY_06_MED_003, TRT: 0:15:10 2000/01/11

This tape contains interview footage of Dempsey Travis developed by The HistoryMakers on January 11, 2000. In the clip, Travis talks about the people and experiences that influenced him. He also talks about going to Washington Park with his cousin to hear Paul Robeson speak. The tape also has stock photos and text graphics edited into Travis' interview clip.