

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Warner Saunders

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Saunders, Warner
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Warner Saunders,
Dates:	March 27, 2001
Bulk Dates:	2001
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:55:18).
Abstract:	Television reporter Warner Saunders (1935 - 2018) was one of Chicago's premier television journalists as the co-anchor of NBC 5's 6:00 pm and 10:00 pm news broadcasts. Saunders got his start in television with the help of Holmes Daddy O' Daylie, on the program, "For Blacks Only," which, was an immediate success and ran for more than a decade. He also hosted NBC's public affairs talk show, "Warner," which was honored with the Illinois Broadcasters Association Public Service Award in 1986. Saunders was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 27, 2001, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2001_067
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

A native of Chicago, Illinois, respected journalist and news anchor Warner Saunders matriculated at Xavier University and received his M.A. from Northeastern University. Famed radio disk jockey Holmes Daddy O' Daylie helped the aspiring reporter enter the profession at a time when very few doors were open to African Americans. Following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the management of a local television station in Chicago asked Daylie to create a special public affairs program for the black community. Daylie agreed and asked that Warner Saunders, then director of the Better Boys Foundation, co-host the show. The resulting program, "For Blacks Only," was an immediate success and ran for more than a decade.

Producers at WBBM-TV Channel 2 Chicago were impressed by the hard working Saunders and, in 1972, hired him to serve as director of Community Affairs and host of the program "Common Ground." In 1980, Saunders left the station and joined the NBC Channel 5 news team as a sports reporter. He also hosted NBC's public affairs talk show, "Warner," which was honored with the Illinois Broadcasters Association Public Service Award in 1986. Currently, a co-anchor of NBC 5's 6:00 pm and 10:00 pm news broadcasts, Saunders is considered one of Chicago's premier news reporters.

Saunders integrity and compelling broadcasts have earned him the esteem of his peers. He has been honored with fourteen Chicago Emmys, the Chicago Academy of Television Arts and Sciences' Silver Circle Award and the Ohio State Award, among many others. In 1993, he was inducted into the Chicago Journalism Hall of Fame. For his commitment to improving the lives of members of the community, Mr. Saunders received the prestigious Hull House Jane Addams Medal.

Saunders passed away on October 9, 2018.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Warner Saunders was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on March 27, 2001, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Television reporter Warner Saunders (1935 - 2018) was one of Chicago's premier television journalists as the co-anchor of NBC 5's 6:00 pm and 10:00 pm news broadcasts. Saunders got his start in television with the help of Holmes Daddy O' Daylie, on the program, "For Blacks Only," which, was an immediate success and ran for more than a decade. He also hosted NBC's public affairs talk show, "Warner," which was honored with the Illinois Broadcasters Association Public Service Award in 1986.

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:

Saunders, Warner

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Saunders, Warner--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Television Reporter

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 Warner Saunders, March 27, 2001. 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 Warner Saunders, Section A2001_067_001_001, TRT: 0:31:08 ?
Journalist and news anchor Warner Saunders discusses his family origins, his grandparents and his mother and father. He explains how his grandfather

changed his name to Gus Saunders to hide his identity. His early childhood growing up on the South Side of Chicago is comparable with the concept of the black metropolis. He remembers colorful figures involved in the policy racket, or illegal lottery: politicians, policemen, and gang members. His early heroes were Dr. Theodore Lawless, a distinguished physician and leading dermatologist, and Edgar G. Brown, NAACP organizer and civil rights activist, both African-Americans living in Chicago. He attended a Catholic elementary school and went to a white school, St. Philip, for his first year of high school, where he encountered overt racism for the first time after living the rest of his life in a segregated community.

Video Oral History Interview with Warner Saunders, Section A2001_067_001_002, TRT: 0:31:05 ?

Journalist and news anchor Warner Saunders left St. Philip after a year, because the white students and teachers made him feel unwelcome. He graduated from Corpus Christi, a Chicago South Side high school for black Catholics. He was a high school basketball player, and was recruited by white colleges, but on making a visit to Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois, he encountered such bigotry that he decided to enroll instead in Xavier University of Louisiana, a historically black Catholic college. In college, he continued basketball and track and played with the Harlem Globetrotters after graduation, but did not think he could have a career in the NBA. Next, he began teaching at Hess School and doing youth work in the community, which led to his job as executive director of the Boys' Club. It was during that time that he was involved in the Civil Rights Movement in the South, and formed friendships with some leaders of the local Black Panther Party.

Video Oral History Interview with Warner Saunders, Section A2001_067_001_003, TRT: 0:31:10 ?

Journalist and news anchor Warner Saunders continues to describe his life on the West Side of Chicago from 1962 to 1973. While still at the Better Boys Foundation, he worked with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during his campaign in Chicago. Daddy-O Daylie a radio personality, motivated the beginnings of Saunders's TV broadcast career during the riots in 1968, which turned into a permanent assignment as talk show host on Channel 7 , doing 'For Blacks Only'. He joined Channel 2 as community affairs director in 1973, hosting the show 'Common Ground' and winning multiple Chicago Emmy awards. In spite of detractors who said he was too old, he managed to change his career and became a television news reporter and anchor in his forties at WMAQ-TV in 1980.

Video Oral History Interview with Warner Saunders, Section A2001_067_001_004, TRT: 0:31:21 ?

Hosting 'Common Ground' in the 1970s, Journalist and news anchor Warner Saunders pioneered a no-holds-barred style and emotional appeal to lay a foundation now familiar in TV talk shows. As a reporter he covered a memorable assignment on Nelson Mandela's release from prison in 1991. He also covered sports between 1983-1997, reporting the Bulls basketball championships, the rise of Michael Jordan as a superstar, the Bears' football Super bowl victory, and learned more about writing his own copy. In 1997, he returned to the anchor desk as the nightly news anchor at Channel 5 - NBC, which he has occupied since then. He has become aware of changing racial attitudes in the television news industry. While teaching at Northeastern Illinois University, Warner Saunders met his wife, Sadako, whose Japanese culture and ethnicity have influenced his thinking about black Americans. They had a son, Warner Saunders, Jr.

Video Oral History Interview with Warner Saunders, Section A2001_067_001_005, TRT: 0:31:21 ?

Journalist and news anchor Warner Saunders discusses the need to erase prejudice and inferiority. He then shares his hopes for the black community

before reflecting on some of the gains and losses which came out of segregation.
Saunders then considers his legacy.

Video Oral History Interview with Warner Saunders, Section A2001_067_001_006, TRT: 0:19:13 ?