

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Donald J. Jackson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Jackson, Donald J., 1943-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Donald J. Jackson,
Dates:	July 9, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:17:25).
Abstract:	Production company chief executive Donald J. Jackson (1943 -) was the founder of Central City Broadcasting. Jackson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 9, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2002_040
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Donald J. Jackson was born on September 18, 1943 in Chicago, Illinois to Lillian Peachy and John Wesley Jackson. As founder and CEO of Central City Productions, Jackson has dedicated his life to filling the gap left by mainstream media. For more than 30 years, he has produced and marketed quality television shows that emphasize African American culture.

Jackson graduated from Marshall High School in 1961, where he played basketball on a championship team and earned a basketball scholarship to Northwestern University. He was captain of the basketball team and graduated in 1965 with a B.S. in radio, TV and film. Jackson began working in advertising for RR Donnelley as an account executive. Then, in 1967, Chicago radio station WVON hired him as the sales manager.

In 1970, Jackson founded Central City Marketing to market, promote and produce African American media. Central City Productions (CCP) grew out of Central City Marketing in 1978 and started producing and syndicating television programs and managing advertising sales with Jackson at the helm. The programs include: *The Bud Billiken Back-to-School Parade*, the first and only televised black parade; *MBR: Minority Business Report*, the first nationally syndicated business show highlighting minorities; *The Stellar Gospel Music Awards*, which Jackson began in 1985; and *Know Your Heritage*, the first televised quiz show featuring African American students.

Jackson is Chairman of the Board of the DuSable Museum of African American History and has served as a board member of the Chicago Transit Authority, Columbia College Chicago, Gateway Foundation and Junior Achievement of Chicago. He helped to found the Alliance of Business Leaders and Entrepreneurs (A.B.L.E.). Jackson and his wife, Rosemary, have two children and a grandson.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Donald J. Jackson was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 9, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Production company chief executive Donald J. Jackson (1943 -) was the founder of Central City Broadcasting.

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:

Jackson, Donald J., 1943-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Bieschke, Paul (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Jackson, Donald J., 1943---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

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 Donald J. Jackson, July 9, 2002. 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 Donald J. Jackson, Section A2002_040_001_001, TRT: 0:31:10 ?

Donald Jackson describes his family's background. Jackson's mother, Lillian Peachy Jackson, was born on November 27, 1920 in San Antonio, Texas to Vance Ball "Nana" Peachy and Leo Peachy. Nana Peachy passed as white in order to gain access to the training clubs in gyms where she worked as a masseuse. Jackson's father, John Wesley Jackson, was born on August 15, 1921 to Golena Washington Jackson and Ivory Jackson. After Jackson's father was born, Ivory Jackson left Jackson, Mississippi for Chicago, Illinois after having killed a white man as a retaliatory act. In Chicago, Ivory Jackson was stabbed in a card fight, leaving John Wesley Jackson to take care of his family. Jackson's father worked as a garbage man for a private scavenger service while his mother

was a housewife. Jackson attended St James Elementary School, Our Lady of Sorrows, St. Malachy Elementary School, and Marshall High School in Chicago, Illinois, where he played basketball, met his future wife Rosemary Jackson, and graduated in 1961.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald J. Jackson, Section A2002_040_001_002, TRT: 0:30:00
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Donald Jackson describes his experiences at Northwestern University, WBBM-TV in Chicago, Illinois, and WVON Radio. In 1961, Jackson accepted a basketball scholarship to Northwestern University after his friend and teammate Jim Pitts demanded that Jackson come to Northwestern with him. While at Northwestern, Jackson studied radio, television, and film and in the summer of 1964 became the first black intern at a downtown Chicago television station at WBBM-TV. While interning, Jackson encountered racism from the crew and from the new program manager, Chuck Hines, which caused him to leave the station. Jackson received his B.A. degree in communications in 1965 and married Rosemary Jackson in 1966. In 1967, he began working at WVON Radio alongside hosts such as Herb Kent. In 1968, while WVON was the most popular radio station in Chicago, Jackson began to feel frustrated at how the station's white owners, The Chess Brothers Leonard and Phil Chess, ran black radio stations and decided to start his own business.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald J. Jackson, Section A2002_040_001_003, TRT: 0:30:11
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Donald Jackson describes his founding of Central City Marketing, his entry into television production, and his work at Tribune Central City Productions. After feeling that white radio station owners did not care about the black community, Jackson left WVON in 1970 to work as a marketing consultant. Here, Jackson specialized in promoting companies such as Jewel, Quaker Oats, Johnson and Johnson, and Riceland Foods to black consumer audiences as well as merchandising to stores in the inner city. In 1978, Jackson started working in television when he produced the Bud Billiken Day Parade for WGN-TV, followed shortly by "Know Your Heritage." He started Tribune Central City Productions with colleagues at WGN and produced shows including the "Soul Train Music Awards," "Stellar Gospel Music Awards," "Martin the Emancipator", "Living the Dream," "March on Washington Remembered," and "Celebrate the Soul of American Music."

Video Oral History Interview with Donald J. Jackson, Section A2002_040_001_004, TRT: 0:31:14
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Donald Jackson describes leaving Tribune Central City Productions and his aspirations for creating the first black broadcast network, which he would call the "Late Night Television Network." After continuing to create shows such as the 25th Anniversary of Soul Train, Jackson decided to start a network when he realized the increasing difficulty of airing black shows on major broadcast networks and the limited potential for original programming on black cable networks such as BET, the MBC Network, and NUE-TV. Jackson shares his hopes that creating a black broadcast network would not only create revenue by marketing to black families and late night viewers, but would create a place where black original programming such as soap operas, dramas, quiz shows, and sitcoms could be created and distributed and where black crew members could find employment. Jackson reflects upon his legacy as an innovator in the creation and distribution of black television programming. He ends the interview by narrating his photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald J. Jackson, Section A2002_040_001_005, TRT: 0:14:50

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Donald Jackson continues to narrate his photographs.