

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with A'Lelia Bundles

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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>	Bundles, A'Lelia Perry
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with A'Lelia Bundles,
<b>Dates:</b>	June 13, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:55:16).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Author and television news producer A'Lelia Bundles (1952 - ) is the former ABC News bureau chief of Washington, D.C., produced ABC World News Tonight, and serves as the director of talent development. Bundles is also the author of, <i>On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C.J. Walker</i> , based upon the business empire built by her great-great-grandmother. Bundles was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 13, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_132
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Award-winning news producer and author A'Lelia Bundles was born in Chicago, Illinois, on June 7, 1952. After graduating high school in Indianapolis, Bundles went on to Harvard College, earning her A.B. in 1974, and then to the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, earning an M.S.J. in 1976.

During her senior year at Harvard, Bundles began working at WTLC-FM as a

news anchor. Later that same year she was hired by DuPont as an assistant in the public affairs department, and she remained there until 1975. Upon completing her master's degree, she went to NBC News, working as a producer for several programs across the country. In 1989, Bundles went to ABC News, where she became the Washington bureau chief and the producer of *ABC World News Tonight with Peter Jennings*. Currently, she works with ABC as the director of talent development.

Bundles is also the author of a book, *On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C.J. Walker*, based upon the business empire built by her great-great-grandmother. Walker was born in 1867 to freed slaves and went on to create a hair-care product to enable both herself and her saleswomen to become self-sufficient. The work has earned Bundles much praise, including a 2001 *New York Times* Notable Book mention and the 2001 Letitia Woods Brown Book Prize from the Association of Black Women Historians. She has had articles published in a wide variety of magazines and journals as well, including *The New York Times Book Review*, *Essence*, and *Fortune Small Business*.

Bundles serves as vice chairperson of the Madam Walker Theatre Center, chairperson of the National Association of Black Journalists Authors Showcase, and past president of the Radcliffe College Alumnae Association. She has also won an Emmy.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with A'Lelia Bundles was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 13, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Author and television news producer A'Lelia Bundles (1952 - ) is the former ABC News bureau chief of Washington, D.C., produced ABC World News Tonight, and serves as the director of talent development. Bundles is also the author of, *On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C.J. Walker*, based upon the business empire built by her great-great-grandmother.

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## Restrictions

### Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The

## 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:

Bundles, A'Lelia Perry

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Bundles, A'Lelia Perry --Interviews

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## Organizations:

## **Occupations:**

Author

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Television News Producer

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

MediaMakers

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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 A'Lelia Bundles, June 13, 2003. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### **Processing Information**

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 2/5/2020 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

Video Oral History Interview with A'Levia Bundles, Section  
A2003\_132\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:38 2003/06/13

A'Levia Bundles talks about her family background. Her mother, A'Levia Mae Perry Bundles, was born on July 22, 1928 in Pine Bluff, Arkansas to Marion Rowland Perry, Jr. and Mae Walker Perry. Her mother's family was a prominent one that included free people of color in the 19th century as well as the well-known cosmetics founder Madame C.J. Walker. A'Levia Mae Perry Bundles attended finishing school at Palmer Memorial Institute in North Carolina and subsequently graduated from Howard University. Bundles' father, Samuel Henry Bundles, Jr., was born on February 15, 1927 in Indianapolis, Indiana to Samuel Henry Bundles, Sr. and Ellis Davis Bundles. Though from a humble background, Samuel Henry Bundles, Jr. served in the military in Hawaii during World War II and graduated from Indiana University when the war ended. Bundles' reflects on growing up in a neighborhood full of African American professionals where she attended predominantly white schools. She also describes her bookish childhood personality.

Video Oral History Interview with A'Levia Bundles, Section  
A2003\_132\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:59 2003/06/13

A'Levia Bundles describes her high school and college education. Growing up in Indianapolis, Indiana, Bundles attended North Central High School, which was predominantly white. She was elected Vice President of the Student Council in 1968, sparking a controversy among some parents who disapproved of a black student holding this position. At this same time, Bundles became

aware of the Black Power Movement and became more militant in her ideology. When she graduated in 1974, she decided to attend Radcliffe College, the women's college affiliated with Harvard University. At Radcliffe, she became involved in the college radio station and found a community of likeminded African Americans. After graduation, Bundles worked for a summer at an Indianapolis radio station and for a year as a staff assistant at the DuPont Company before going to journalism school at Columbia University. At the end of the tape, Bundles begins to talk about the professors who influenced her at Harvard University.

Video Oral History Interview with A'Lelia Bundles, Section  
A2003\_132\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:16 2003/06/13

A'Lelia Bundles remembers her early journalism career. Bundles spent the summer of 1973 in Jamaica researching the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation for her senior thesis at Harvard University. At the beginning of that summer, Bundles interned with "Newsweek Magazine" in Chicago, Illinois where she met a number of prominent African American journalists including Vernon Jarrett and Basil Phillips. It was in journalism school at Columbia University that Bundles began to research her great-great-grandmother, Madam C.J. Walker who she eventually wrote a book about called "On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C.J. Walker" which was published in 2001. In 1976, Bundles began working at NBC, first in New York City and subsequently in Houston, Texas and Atlanta, Georgia. While in Atlanta, Bundles covered a number of famous stories including the Wayne Williams trial in 1982 and Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr.'s U.S. presidential campaign in 1984.

Video Oral History Interview with A'Lelia Bundles, Section  
A2003\_132\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:36 2003/06/13

A'Lelia Bundles describes her career. In 1984, Bundles worked as a reporter on the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr. presidential campaign, which she believes was monumental in American politics. After the campaign, Bundles moved to Washington D.C. and became a producer for the NBC news shows "American Almanac," "1986," and "Primetime News Specials." Later, she

moved to ABC where she produced “World News Tonight with Peter Jennings” and “American Agenda.” She also worked with news anchor Carol Simpson, and then eventually became deputy bureau chief for ABC. In 1998, Bundles took a leave of absence and then eventually left her job in order to work on her book “On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C.J. Walker.” While some information on Madam C.J. Walker was available through her family, Bundles spent considerable time doing additional research. She also faced a legal battle with the family of Alex Haley, whom Bundles had previously worked with in 1982 on a book he had intended to write about Madam C.J. Walker.

Video Oral History Interview with A'Lelia Bundles, Section  
A2003\_132\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:46 2003/06/13

A'Lelia Bundles talks about her book “On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C.J. Walker.” While trying to write her book on Madam C.J. Walker, Bundles endured a two-year legal battle with the estate of Alex Haley. After protracted legal negotiations, Bundles was eventually able to write her book. Another legal battle involves Bundles’ allegations of plagiarism against author Beverly Lowry who wrote a book about Madam C.J. Walker in 2003. On the other hand, Bundles expresses appreciation for the positive feedback that her book received and the fact that people are inspired by Madam C.J. Walker’s story. In writing the book, Bundles believes the most interesting thing she discovered was Madam C.J. Walker’s extensive political involvement with the anti-lynching movement. Bundles also reflects on her desire to tell the stories of her other, non-famous, relatives in order to preserve the stories and histories of African Americans from the past.

Video Oral History Interview with A'Lelia Bundles, Section  
A2003\_132\_001\_006, TRT: 0:25:01 2003/06/13

A'Lelia Bundles reflects upon her legacy and how she would like to be remembered. She hopes that she will have an impact on future generations through her work mentoring employees at ABC News and through her books about Madam C.J. Walker. She would like to be remembered as someone who has told a story with passion

and who contributed to her community. She concludes the tape by narrating her photographs.