

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Leroy C. Richie

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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>	Richie, Leroy C.
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Leroy C. Richie,
<b>Dates:</b>	January 31, 2005 and July 9, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003 and 2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	14 Betacame SP videocassettes (6:32:04).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Corporate general counsel Leroy C. Richie (1941 - ) has been a pioneering executive lawyer at the Chrysler Corporation and at the United States Golf Association. Richie was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 31, 2005 and July 9, 2003, in Birmingham, Michigan and Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_152
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Born on September 27, 1941, in Buffalo, New York, to Mattie and Leroy C. Richie, the younger Leroy C. Richie graduated as valedictorian of his class at the City College of New York in 1970. After earning his law degree from New York University in 1973, Richie worked in private practice for the New York law firm of White & Case until 1978. Richie then entered government service when he was appointed to serve as director of the Federal Trade Commission's New York office.

In 1983, Richie entered corporate America as assistant general counsel to the

Chrysler Corporation under the reign of Lee Iacocca. Given some key assignments, Richie quickly rose to vice president and general counsel; he was the only African American in the top ranks of the giant Detroit automaker at that time. In 1992, Richie made history again by becoming the first African American to serve as general counsel to the Executive Committee of the United States Golf Association. In 1997, Richie was elected to the organization's board of directors.

Richie was active in promoting diversity in the legal profession; he frequently spoke on that issue at conferences and on panels. Richie was also secretary of Detroit's Museum of African American History and served as an officer for the Detroit Black Chamber of Commerce. Additionally, Richie served as a board member for Marygrove College; St. Joseph's Hospital in Pontiac, Michigan; and the Detroit Bar Foundation. Richie and his wife, Julia C. Thomas, were married in 1972; the couple raised two children, Brooke and Darcy.

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## **Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Leroy C. Richie was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on January 31, 2005 and July 9, 2003, in Birmingham, Michigan and Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 14 Betacame SP videocassettes. Corporate general counsel Leroy C. Richie (1941 - ) has been a pioneering executive lawyer at the Chrysler Corporation and at the United States Golf Association.

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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:

Richie, Leroy C.

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Richie, Leroy C.--Interviews

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African American lawyers--Interviews

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African American executives--Interviews

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African American families

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African American mothers

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African American fathers

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Poverty--United States

---

African American youth

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Buffalo (N.Y.)

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Divorce--Psychological aspects

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United States--Army--African Americans--Social conditions

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Southern States--Race relations--History

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Segregation

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Bronx Community College

---

Racial profiling in law enforcement

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Courtship

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New York University

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Law firms

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United States. Federal Trade Commission

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Corporate law

---

Chrysler Corporation

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African Americans--Michigan--Detroit.

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Automobile industry and trade.

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Iacocca, Lee A.

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South Africa

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Mandela, Nelson, 1918-

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Mbeki, Thabo

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Marriage

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Parent and child

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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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## **Occupations:**

Corporate General Counsel

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

LawMakers

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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 Leroy C. Richie, January 31, 2005 and July 9, 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 Leroy C. Richie, Section  
A2003\_152\_001\_001, TRT: 0:31:14 2003/07/09

Corporate attorney Leroy C. Richie shares his family's background and describes his childhood growing up in Buffalo, New York. Richie details his relationships with his mother, father, and siblings, and recalls growing up in impoverished conditions. Richie also recalls his own personality and his early school days.

African American lawyers--Interviews.

African American executives--Interviews.

African American families.

African American mothers.

African American fathers.

Poverty--United States.

African American youth.  
Buffalo (N.Y.).  
Divorce--Psychological aspects.  
United States. Army--African Americans--Social conditions.  
Southern States--Race relations--History.  
Segregation.  
Bronx Community College.  
Racial profiling in law enforcement.  
Courtship.  
New York University.  
Law firms.  
United States. Federal Trade Commission.  
Corporation law.  
Chrysler Corporation.  
African Americans--Michigan--Detroit.  
Automobile industry and trade.  
Iacocca, Lee A.  
South Africa.  
Mandela, Nelson, 1918-.  
Mbeki, Thabo.  
Marriage.  
Parent and child.

Video Oral History Interview with Leroy C. Richie, Section  
A2003\_152\_001\_002, TRT: 0:31:15 2003/07/09

Leroy C. Richie continues to discuss his upbringing in Buffalo, New York. Richie describes his academic success as a child and while in high school, and also explains how the breakup of his parents' marriage affected him and his siblings. Richie then describes his initial struggles in higher education, and talks about his subsequent stint in the military, during which he was based in the South and encountered segregation for the first time.

Video Oral History Interview with Leroy C. Richie, Section  
A2003\_152\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:12 2003/07/09

Leroy C. Richie discusses his service in the military and

describes his experience in Germany. Richie details his enrollment at Bronx Community College, where he met his wife and excelled in school. Richie also spends time describing two incidents in which he was arrested, discussing the racial factor involved in both arrests.

Video Oral History Interview with Leroy C. Richie, Section  
A2003\_152\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:09 2003/07/09

Leroy C. Richie describes his law school experience at New York University and explains how he paid his own way through school. Richie then discusses applying to law firms for the first time after graduation and explaining how he was hired at White and Case. Richie details his time at White and Case, focusing particularly on how he was able to integrate himself into a white corporate culture without losing his own identity. Richie also describes the types of cases on which he worked during his first days at White and Case and talks about his successes there.

Video Oral History Interview with Leroy C. Richie, Section  
A2003\_152\_001\_005, TRT: 0:31:15 2003/07/09

Leroy C. Richie continues to describe his employment at the prestigious law firm of White and Case, discussing notable cases and clients, and naming some of his mentors at the firm. Richie then explains why he decided to leave Case and White, and talks about the circumstances leading to his hiring at the Federal Trade Commission. Richie discusses his first major task at the FTC, which was to hire fifty new attorneys.

Video Oral History Interview with Leroy C. Richie, Section  
A2003\_152\_001\_006, TRT: 0:21:13 2003/07/09

Leroy C. Richie details his time as director of the Federal Trade Commission's New York office. Richie describes the working environment and explains how he navigated office politics to become a respected leader. Richie discusses many of the ethical issues he had to deal with and how these differed from his time as a private attorney. Richie then explains his subsequent hiring at Chrysler Corporation.

Video Oral History Interview with Leroy C. Richie, Section  
A2003\_152\_001\_007, TRT: 0:25:24 2003/07/09

Leroy C. Richie resumes his interview by summarizing his

decision to leave the Federal Trade Commission to become assistant general counsel at the Chrysler Corporation. Richie explains how this move affected his family, including his wife's political aspirations. Richie explains the restructuring of Chrysler and outlines the role and responsibilities of his position. Richie then begins a story about his negotiation with an auto workers' union in Milwaukee for Chrysler.

Video Oral History Interview with Leroy C. Richie, Section  
A2003\_152\_001\_008, TRT: 0:31:15 2003/07/09

Leroy C. Richie details his time at the Chrysler Corporation, outlining his duties and responsibilities as associate general council. Richie talks about many of the challenges he faced while at Chrysler, and explains how he turned challenges into successes. His success eventually led to his promotion as the first general counsel and vice president in Chrysler's history. Richie tells the story behind the promotion, and acknowledges the support of Detroit's black community.

Video Oral History Interview with Leroy C. Richie, Section  
A2003\_152\_001\_009, TRT: 0:29:07 2003/07/09

Leroy C. Richie continues to detail his time as general council and vice president at the Chrysler Corporation. In this portion of the interview, Richie focuses on the politics and power struggles that took place behind the scenes at Chrysler, and explains how he had to carefully wield his power and influence. Richie also discusses his initiative, the Minority Counsel Demonstration, whose goal was to increase the numbers of black law firms doing corporate cases and to increase the number of black lawyers hired.

Video Oral History Interview with Leroy C. Richie, Section  
A2003\_152\_002\_010, TRT: 0:30:40 2005/01/31

Leroy C. Richie resumes his interview continuing to discuss his time as vice president at the Chrysler Corporation. Richie discusses his professional relationships with fellow executive Gerald Greenwald and Detroit mayor Coleman Young. Richie also tells of negotiations and settlements he encountered in his position, including an important settlement with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Video Oral History Interview with Leroy C. Richie, Section  
A2003\_152\_002\_011, TRT: 0:29:00 2005/01/31

Leroy C. Richie shares his management philosophy he used while employed as a vice president of the Chrysler Corporation, and gives an example of how he used his skills to win liability lawsuits. Richie then discusses diversity and minority success in corporate American, and explains his working relationship with the minority law firm of Lewis and Munday, to which he sent many Chrysler cases. Richie talks about efforts to improve diversity in corporate law with the Minority Corporate Counsel Association.

Video Oral History Interview with Leroy C. Richie, Section  
A2003\_152\_002\_012, TRT: 0:29:50 2005/01/31

Leroy C. Richie details his involvement in the odometer fraud scandal at Chrysler in 1986 and explains how he and other executives were able to save the company's credibility. Richie also discusses the retirement of Chrysler CEO Lee Iacocca and explains how that affected the company. Richie then talks about his own retirement from Chrysler, as he often found himself at odds with the new executives.

Video Oral History Interview with Leroy C. Richie, Section  
A2003\_152\_002\_013, TRT: 0:31:10 2005/01/31

Leroy C. Richie details his experiences in South Africa as a representative for the Chrysler Corporation, describing his meeting with Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki and explaining his efforts to start black automobile dealerships in South Africa. Richie then discusses his activities with the law firm of Lewis and Munday, where he holds the of counsel position. Richie reflects on his career and gives advice on being a lawyer, then talks about his children and his relationship with his wife.

Video Oral History Interview with Leroy C. Richie, Section  
A2003\_152\_002\_014, TRT: 0:10:20 2005/01/31

Leroy C. Richie continues to discuss his relationship with his wife, shares his plans for the future, and discusses his hopes for the future of African Americans.