

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ronald Davenport

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Davenport, Ronald R.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ronald Davenport,
Dates:	August 12, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:27:25).
Abstract:	Academic administrator and radio station owner Ronald Davenport (1936 -) is the Chair of Sheridan Broadcasting, heard on over three hundred nationwide stations. Davenport had a career teaching law and has served as the dean for the Duquesne University School of Law. Davenport was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 12, 2003, in Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_182
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Businessman and lawyer Ronald Davenport, Sr., was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on May 21, 1936. After earning his B.S. degree in economics from Pennsylvania State University in 1958, Davenport went to law school; earning his LL.B. degree from Temple University in 1962, he went to Yale Law School for his LL.M. degree in 1963.

Davenport started his career as a professor of law at Duquesne University in 1963, where he remained for twenty years. When he took over as dean of the law school in 1970, Davenport became the first black man to be dean of a predominantly white school. In 1982, Davenport became a partner at Buchanan Ingersoll Professional Corporation, and a fellow of the U.S. State Department, reviewing legal systems in South and East Asia. Davenport also served as a consultant to the Constitutional Convention Preparatory Committee of Pennsylvania, and the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention. Not content with simply the practice of law, in 1972, Davenport became chairman of Sheridan Broadcasting Corporation, a group he and his wife formed from the purchase of four radio stations. By 1976, Sheridan Broadcasting owned half of the Mutual Black Network, later completing the buyout. Sheridan Broadcasting was heard through more than three hundred radio affiliates across the country; he also served as the co-chairman of the American Urban Radio Networks.

Beyond his endeavors in the practice of law and broadcasting, Davenport gave his time to a wide variety of other organizations. Davenport served on the board of Colgate University; was chairman of the Visiting Committee of African American Studies at Harvard; and served on the board of Aramark. Davenport was awarded numerous honorary degrees; the Man of the Year Award from the Masons; and participated in several conferences with U.S. presidents.

Davenport and his wife, Judith Marylyn, raised three children.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Ronald Davenport was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on August 12, 2003, in Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Academic administrator and radio station owner Ronald Davenport (1936 -) is the Chair of Sheridan Broadcasting, heard on over three hundred nationwide stations. Davenport had a career teaching law and has served as the dean for the Duquesne University School of Law.

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:

Davenport, Ronald R.

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Davenport, Ronald R.--Interviews

African American educators--Interviews

African Americans in radio broadcasting

African American executives--Interviews

Universities and colleges--Faculty--Interviews

African American families

African Americans--Genealogy

African American mothers

African American fathers

Grandparents as parents

Philadelphia (Pa.)

African American young men

African American youth

African American civic leaders

Stepfamilies.

Pennsylvania State University

Student government.

Temple University. School of Law

Law clerks.

Yale Law School

Civil rights movement

African American law teachers--Interviews

African American lawyers--Interviews

Duquesne University. School of Law

Pittsburgh (Pa.)

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Marriage

Courtship

African American business enterprises.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Radio Station Owner

Law School Dean

HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers|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 Ronald Davenport, August 12, 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 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 Ronald Davenport, Section A2003_182_001_001, TRT: 0:30:54
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Ronald Davenport tells about his mother and father and gives background information on their backgrounds. He then talks about being raised by his grandmother in north Philadelphia and describes his childhood personality and his neighborhood. He gives the names of his elementary and junior high schools. Davenport talks about avoiding the negative influences in his rough neighborhood as a young boy and mentions his involvement in religion as well as his love for music. Davenport recounts his grandparents' influence and leadership in his community and then details his experiences living with his mother and stepfather. He talks about activities in which he was involved during high school as well as his personality at that time. Ronald Davenport discusses briefly his plans to go to college.

African American educators--Interviews.

African Americans in radio broadcasting.

African American executives--Interviews.

Universities and colleges--Faculty--Interviews.

African American families.

African Americans--Genealogy.

African American mothers.

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Grandparents as parents.

Philadelphia (Pa.).

African American young men.

African American youth.

African American civic leaders.

Stepfamilies.

Pennsylvania State University.

Student government.

Temple University. School of Law.

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Yale Law School.

Civil rights movements.

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Marriage.

Courtship.

African American business enterprises.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald Davenport, Section A2003_182_001_002, TRT: 0:30:38
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Ronald Davenport explains how he decided to attend Pennsylvania State University. He speaks in depth about adjusting to the college atmosphere, specifically a campus with a small black population. Davenport details his participation in student government at Penn State and also talks about teaching an economics labs course at the university. He then gives an overview of his experience at Penn State. Next, he talks about his decision to go to law school and how he decided on Temple University. Davenport remembers experiences from law school before mentioning how his logical mind suited studying and practicing law. Finally, Ron Davenport talks about his first jobs while in law school.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald Davenport, Section A2003_182_001_003, TRT: 0:30:14
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Ron Davenport describes his experience as a law clerk in the 1960s. Then he talks about his career aspirations and how he was a campus leader at Penn State. Next, he speaks about his courtship and marriage. Ron Davenport discusses his mentor and his acceptance to Yale Law School and then details his coursework there. He goes into details about experiences while working at Norris, Green, Harris and Higginbotham law firm before remembering one of the law firm's major clients. Next, he tells how Austin Norris was influential to him. He briefly talks about the civil rights scene in Philadelphia. Davenport then explains how he became a professor at Duquesne University School of Law and recalls his experience there. Then, Ron Davenport describes his civic involvement in Pittsburgh.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald Davenport, Section A2003_182_001_004, TRT: 0:30:13
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Ronald Davenport briefly discusses Pittsburgh's accepting community feel. He then describes his civic activities in Pittsburgh while teaching at Duquesne University. Next, he talks about his work for the mayor's office in Pittsburgh. Ron Davenport describes his leadership roles with the Urban League and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and tells about people with whom he worked. He then recalls other aspects of his civil rights activities before talking about becoming dean of Duquesne University's law school. Davenport then explains his career transition from law to radio broadcasting. He details the origins of his broadcasting company. Ron Davenport talks about some of the details behind the funding for the station. Davenport explains how he picked the name for his broadcasting company and then describes how it has expanded over the years. He briefly discusses the history of black radio and explains his feelings on being a black business owner.

Video Oral History Interview with Ronald Davenport, Section A2003_182_001_005, TRT: 0:25:26
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Ron Davenport details the development of the Sheridan Broadcasting Network and talks about his experiences in building his business. Then he gets more in depth about his company's business strategy and talks about its affiliates. Davenport explains why his broadcasting network has been successful and about some of the programming. Next, he discusses his hopes for the future of Sheridan Broadcasting and talks about his successes and mistakes in the radio

business. Then, he mentions his children's participation in the broadcasting business. He considers decision-making opportunities for African Americans and then considers the future successes of the black community. Ron Davenport considers his legacy and how he'd like to be remembered.