

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Daymond John

---

## 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>	John, Daymond
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Daymond John,
<b>Dates:</b>	September 16, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003
<b>Physical Description:</b>	3 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:07:47).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Fashion designer Daymond John (1969 - ) is the CEO and founder of the clothing line, FUBU The Collection. John was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 16, 2003, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_213
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Hip-hop fashion designer Daymond John, founder and CEO of clothing label FUBU, was born in Brooklyn, New York, of Caribbean parents. Growing up in Queens, New York, John's entrepreneurial talents were exhibited at an early age; he sold everything from pencils to reconditioned cars.

Upon graduating from high school, John worked as a waiter at Red Lobster before getting his start in the clothing industry. In 1992, from his mother's basement in Queens, John began making hats to sell at concerts and neighborhood festivals. Encouraged by his early success, John recruited his childhood friends, Alexander Martin, Carl Brown, and Keith Perrin, to work with him; they began sewing tie-

top hats. John set up shop at his mother's house, taking out a \$100,000 mortgage. This was the beginning of FUBU, an acronym for For Us, By Us. FUBU's collection later expanded to include hockey jerseys, t-shirts, and baseball caps, all embroidered with the FUBU label.

With early support from John's friend, entertainer LL Cool J, FUBU quickly became one of the leading urban clothing lines, setting fashion trends for young African Americans. However, FUBU's popularity soon extended beyond the inner city, from suburban malls in the Midwest to Russian Internet sites, making it a true international powerhouse.

In 1997, John created the FUBU Foundation, which raised \$1 million annually. Building on the success of FUBU The Collection, John expanded his business empire with the launch in 2000 of FUBU Entertainment. FUBU sportswear also gained a sizable following of professional athletes. It was FUBU Sportswear that sponsored Nienhouse Motorsports for the 1999 Indianapolis 500. In 2002, FUBU began outfitting the Harlem Globetrotters. John also launched y2g.com as a Web portal to target the untapped market of African Americans on the Internet.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Daymond John was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on September 16, 2003, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 3 Betacame SP videocassettes. Fashion designer Daymond John (1969 - ) is the CEO and founder of the clothing line, FUBU The Collection.

---

## 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:

John, Daymond

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

John, Daymond--Interviews

---

## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

## Occupations:

Fashion Designer

---

# HistoryMakers® Category:

StyleMakers

---

## 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 Daymond John, September 16, 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).

---

## 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 Daymond John, Section  
A2003\_213\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:32 2003/09/16

Daymond John describes his parents' backgrounds and tells of how they met in Brooklyn, New York. John says his father is Trinidadian, and explains how his West Indian heritage has influenced his life. He also recalls summers spent in Trinidad during his childhood. John continues to discuss his childhood, sharing memories of growing up in Hollis, Queens and describing himself as being a young entrepreneur. After describing his elementary school experience, John recalls the first time he heard rap music and discusses the inherent appeal of rap music to urban youth. John then talks about his high school days, during which he continued to have an entrepreneurial spirit. He recalls participating in Bayside High School's co-op program, which allowed him to have a full-time job and attend school on an alternating weekly basis. John explains how the co-op experience helped him to learn about the working world.

Video Oral History Interview with Daymond John, Section  
A2003\_213\_001\_002, TRT: 0:31:15 2003/09/16

Daymond John tells the origin of FUBU, his clothing company, prefacing the story with more examples of his entrepreneurial nature. He says FUBU truly began when he started selling homemade hats and shirts with the brand name embroidered onto the clothing. John explains how he and his partners came up with the name FUBU, which means "for us, by us." John details the early days of the company, describing FUBU's success in selling products at fashion expositions and marketing to figures in the entertainment industry. He recalls the company's need to expand, saying that the company found a distributor after John's mother placed an enticing advertisement in 'The New York Times.' He discusses FUBU's relationship with its first distributor, Samsung America, and explains how widespread distribution allowed them to focus more on design and marketing. John then assesses the success of FUBU, citing major accomplishments and its impact on youth culture.

Video Oral History Interview with Daymond John, Section  
A2003\_213\_001\_003, TRT: 0:07:00 2003/09/16

Daymond John explains how he and the three other co-founders of FUBU are able to keep their friendship from interfering with their business partnership, citing delegation and independence as the keys to their success. John then discusses the impact hip-hop culture has had on society, and guesses that because of its natural relationship with youth, it will continue to be influential in the future. John hopes that FUBU will continue to be successful for decades to come. He says that while FUBU has grown from the back of a van into a global brand, the ideology behind the company, "for us, by us," has not changed and never will, thanks to the nature of youth culture.