

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Francis Ward

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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>	Ward, Francis, 1935-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Francis Ward,
<b>Dates:</b>	September 17, 2004
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2004
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:17:27).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Journalism professor and newspaper correspondent Francis Ward (1935 - ) is a professor of journalism at Syracuse University, and held positions with <i>Jet</i> magazine, the Chicago Sun-Times, the L.A. Times and the Miami Herald. He also joined the press corps for former Chicago Mayor Harold Washington. Ward was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 17, 2004, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2004_166
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Usher Francis Ward was born in Atlanta, Georgia on August 11, 1935. After graduating from Booker T. Washington High School in 1953, Ward attended Morehouse College, earning his B.A. in English in 1958. From there, he attended Syracuse University, earning his master's in journalism in 1961.

While attending Morehouse, Ward took a job at the *Atlanta Daily World* as a janitor, and after his graduation, he spent several months working as a proofreader and wrote a few articles. In 1964, Ward met Bob Johnson, and was hired by *Jet* magazine. In 1967, he was promoted to *Ebony*, and the following year he made the move to the *Chicago Sun-Times*. There, he covered the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the aftermath, as well as writing a tribute to Gwendolyn Brooks. In 1970, Ward became the Chicago correspondent for the *L.A. Times*, where he remained until 1978. That year, he joined the staff of the *Miami Herald*, and in 1980, he joined WHUT-TV at Howard University. In 1984, Ward joined the mayor's press corps in Chicago as an assistant press secretary, and he remained there until 1989, working through the administrations of Harold Washington and Eugene Sawyer. After a brief teaching stint at the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, he was hired by the Newhouse School of Journalism at his alma mater of Syracuse University in 1990. He remains there today.

Ward has always felt that journalism is a public service, and he has often spoken out on media responsibility. He and his wife, actress Val Gray Ward, live in New York.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Francis Ward was conducted by Larry Crowe on September 17, 2004, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Journalism professor and newspaper

correspondent Francis Ward (1935 - ) is a professor of journalism at Syracuse University, and held positions with Jet magazine, the Chicago Sun-Times, the L.A. Times and the Miami Herald. He also joined the press corps for former Chicago Mayor Harold Washington.

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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:

Ward, Francis, 1935-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Ward, Francis, 1935---Interviews

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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:

Newspaper Correspondent

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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 Francis Ward, September 17, 2004. 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).

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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 Francis Ward, Section A2004\_166\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:34 ?

Francis Ward was born on August 11, 1935 in Atlanta, Georgia as Usher Francis Ward, named for his maternal uncle and the woman who delivered him. His mother, Effie Crawford Ward was a dressmaker from Social Circle, Georgia who graduated from Spelman College in 1923. Her mother claimed to be of the Nigerian Igbo tribe. Ward's father, Jefferson Ward was born and grew up on a farm in Eatonton, Georgia. In Atlanta, he raised pigs and once spent a morning chasing an escaped hog with his neighbors. He only finished night school, but instilled in his seven children the value of higher education. Ward grew up in Atlanta close to both of his schools, E.R. Carter Elementary and Booker T. Washington High School. His father had frequent political conversations with the local grocer and attended Zion Hill Baptist Church while Ward attended

Friendship Baptist Church with his mother. Ward remembers his mother's cooking, D-Day, the 1948 Democratic National Convention and his father teaching him to fight for his beliefs.

Video Oral History Interview with Francis Ward, Section A2004\_166\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:13 ?

Francis Ward aspired to be a journalist and delivered newspapers for The Atlanta Constitution as a young boy. At E.R. Carter Elementary School, Ward was a good student and at Booker T. Washington High School, he was the secretary of his senior class and worked on the school newspaper. Unable to participate in high school sports due to polio, Ward was the score-keeper for the baseball team. Ward had a close relationship with the coach, who encouraged Ward to go to college and become a journalist. Ward attended Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri for one semester in 1953 before transferring to Morehouse College in Atlanta. He majored in English and political science and learned African American history from Gladstone Louis Chandler and Robert Brisbane. In 1957, he attended a House Un-American Committee hearing and saw journalist Carl Braden interrogated. Ward remembers Benjamin Mays speaking at morning chapel service, Morehouse's reputation and the aftermath of Brown v. Board of Education in Georgia.

Video Oral History Interview with Francis Ward, Section A2004\_166\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:29 ?

Francis Ward graduated from Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia in 1958. He found work as a janitor for the Atlanta Daily World and within six months was promoted to proofreader. In 1959, Ward attended S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University in New York to obtain an M.A. in journalism. While there, he saw HistoryMaker Earl Francis Lloyd play in a Syracuse Nationals game and roomed with a white missionary and international students from Ghana, Nigeria and India. After graduating in 1961, Ward went to New York City; unable to find a job in journalism, he became a social worker. In 1964 Ward traveled to Chicago, Illinois and was offered a job at Jet magazine. His first time covering the Civil Rights Movement was in 1965 when he traveled to Natchez, Mississippi and reported on the bombing of the local NAACP chapter president. As a reporter for Jet, Ward also met his wife, HistoryMaker Val Gray Ward when he was assigned to write about her dramatic interpretations of poetry.

Video Oral History Interview with Francis Ward, Section A2004\_166\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:21 ?

Francis Ward saw the Atlanta Black Crackers Negro League baseball team and Jackie Robinson in an exhibition game in Atlanta during the 1940s. In 1967, Ward covered the fight between Muhammad Ali and HistoryMaker Ernie Terrell in Houston, Texas for Jet magazine. After leaving Jet for Ebony, Ward wrote stories mostly about celebrity lives. During this time, he attended a meeting where HistoryMaker John H. Johnson vetoed the idea of writing about Stokely Carmichael, fearing it would upset the magazine's white advertisers. This aligned with the way white media of the 1960s vilified the militant Civil Rights leaders while praising the accomplishments of the non-violent ones. Ward became a reporter for the Chicago Sun-Times in 1968 and reported on the Chicago Riot following Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s death. In 1970, Ward's wife took part in a protest, which resulted in Negro Digest changing its name to Black World. Ward explains the history of the 1965 and 1966 riots in Chicago, Illinois.

Video Oral History Interview with Francis Ward, Section A2004\_166\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:59 ?

Francis Ward and his wife, HistoryMaker Val Gray Ward founded the Kuumba Theatre in Chicago, Illinois in 1968. One of the plays they produced, 'The Image Makers,' written by HistoryMaker Useni Eugene Perkins, spoofed black

exploitation films and was performed at FESTAC in 1977 in Lagos, Nigeria. Ward wrote and edited Kuumba Theatre's newsletter, Kuumba News, and used this platform to address a variety of issues, including the need to recognize women's rights. Kuumba Theatre was criticized by some in the African nationalist community for accepting money from white organizations; however, the Wards believed that taxpayer funds had no more strings attached than any of their other funding sources. In 1977, Ward helped found First World: An International Journal of Black Thought, which was created in response to HistoryMaker John H. Johnson's discontinuation of Black World for monetary reasons. Ward shares his critique of blackploitation films' impact on youth.

Video Oral History Interview with Francis Ward, Section A2004\_166\_001\_006, TRT: 0:30:49 ?

Francis Ward became a reporter for the Midwestern bureau of the Los Angeles Times in 1968. Although he did not share the paper's political stance, Ward was able to cover stories affecting the black community that were otherwise underreported in the mainstream press. In 1975, Ward helped organize the National Association of Black Journalists in Washington, D.C. In 1978, Ward became a reporter for the Miami Herald and stayed for two years before going to D.C. to work for the fledgling WHMM-TV. In 1984, Ward joined Chicago Mayor Harold Washington's press office and remained after his death, working for HistoryMaker Eugene Sawyer. Ward then taught at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism before teaching at his alma mater, S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. He describes his teaching philosophy, concerns for the African American community and Harold Washington's accomplishments and affiliation with Clarence McClain. He reflects upon celebrity worship, his family and his greatest regret.

Video Oral History Interview with Francis Ward, Section A2004\_166\_001\_007, TRT: 0:16:02 ?

Francis Ward shares his impressions of Chicago, Illinois mayor Harold Washington and the relationships he formed with members of his base. Ward believes Washington's treatment of HistoryMaker Lutrelle "Lu" F. Palmer, II revealed Washington's tendency to miss opportunities for building stronger support. He critiques Washington's tenure as mayor. He also gives advice to aspiring journalists, telling them to be the best they can be and be committed. Ward reflects upon his legacy and how he would like to be remembered. He concludes by narrating his photographs.