

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Fletcher "Flash" Wiley

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## Overview of the Collection

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| <b>Repository:</b>           | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com  |
| <b>Creator:</b>              | Wiley, Fletcher Houston, 1942-  |
| <b>Title:</b>                | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Fletcher "Flash" Wiley,  |
| <b>Dates:</b>                | October 15, 2004 and September 11, 2019   |
| <b>Bulk Dates:</b>           | 2004 and 2019   |
| <b>Physical Description:</b> | 14 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (6:53:58).   |
| <b>Abstract:</b>             | Lawyer Fletcher "Flash" Wiley (1942 - ) , CEO of the Centaurus Group, LLC and of counsel to the law firm of Morgan Lewis & Bockius, LLP, co-founded the law firm of Budd, Reilly and Wiley, and was vice president and general counsel of PRWT Services, Inc. Wiley was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 15, 2004 and September 11, 2019, in Boston, Massachusetts and Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| <b>Identification:</b>       | A2004_206   |
| <b>Language:</b>             | The interview and records are in English.   |

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Lawyer and civic leader Fletcher “Flash” Wiley was born on November 29, 1942 in Chicago, Illinois. Four years after his birth, Wiley’s family moved to Indianapolis, Indiana, where he was raised. In 1953, Wiley was selected as a charter member of the “Gifted Child Program” by the Indianapolis Public Schools, in which he was the only African American in his class. Upon graduation from Shortridge High School in 1960, Wiley was recruited by the United States Air Force Academy and became the first African American from the State of Indiana

appointed to a military academy, as well as the school's first African American football player. As an athlete, he gained the nickname "Flash," and in 1965, became the fifth African American graduate of the Air Force Academy and the Academy's first black Fulbright Scholar. Wiley continued his studies at L'Institut Des Etudes Politiques at the University of Paris in France; and, in 1974, following his service as a captain in the U.S. Air Force, he received his M.P.P. degree from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and his J.D. degree from Harvard Law School.

For almost four decades, Wiley has worked as a practicing attorney concentrating in the areas of corporate and commercial law, small business development, entertainment law and real estate. He helped form the Boston, Massachusetts-based law firm of Budd, Reilly and Wiley, the largest minority-dominant firm in New England. In 1996, Wiley joined PRWT Services, Inc., as vice president and general counsel; and before he retired from employment with PRWT in 2008, he helped build the company into one of the nation's largest minority-owned businesses and Black Enterprise Magazine's 2009 "Company of the Year". He remains a member of the PRWT Advisory Board.

Wiley has served as a Director of several for-profit business organizations, including three public companies. He retired in 2011, after two decades as a Director of The TJX Companies, Inc. (NYSE). He is a director of the privately-held sports enterprise, Haymon Boxing, LLC. He is also of counsel to the law firm Morgan, Lewis & Bockius, LLP (formerly Bingham McCutchen LLP), where he specializes in corporate and commercial law. He is also chairman and chief executive officer of the Centaurus Group, LLC, where he serves as an investor and principal in several commercial, real estate development, and management consulting ventures.

Wiley has been involved in many civic and charitable activities. In 1984, he founded and chaired the Governor's Commission on Minority Business Development. He also served for seven years, first as president and later as national chairman, of the Black Entertainment and Sports Lawyers Association, Inc.; and he later served for two years as chairman of the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce. Wiley is also a founding member of the Black Alumni Associations of both the Harvard Law School and the Harvard Kennedy School. He is a benefactor of Crispus Attucks Children's Center, Inc.; a founding member of the Harvard Law School and the Harvard Kennedy School Black Alumni Organizations; a former Director of the New England Legal Foundation; Overseer of the New England Region Anti-Defamation League; and Chairman of the Board of The Dimock Center, Inc. He has also received numerous civic and professional awards, including induction into the 2010 "Academy of Distinguished

Bostonians.” In 2011, he was named by U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates to the Board of Visitors of The Air University; and in 2012, President Barack Obama appointed him to the Board of Visitors of the U.S. Air Force Academy. In 2012, he received Honorary Doctorates from Cambridge College and New England School of Law.

Wiley is a member of the Bars of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and District of Columbia, and belongs to the American, National, and Massachusetts Bar Associations.

He and his wife, Benaree Pratt Wiley, live in Brookline, Massachusetts. They have two children: a son, Pratt, and a daughter, B.J.

Fletcher “Flash” Wiley was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on October 15, 2004.

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## **Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Fletcher "Flash" Wiley was conducted by Larry Crowe and Robert Hayden on October 15, 2004 and September 11, 2019, in Boston, Massachusetts and Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, and was recorded on 14 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. Lawyer Fletcher "Flash" Wiley (1942 - ) , CEO of the Centaurus Group, LLC and of counsel to the law firm of Morgan Lewis & Bockius, LLP, co-founded the law firm of Budd, Reilly and Wiley, and was vice president and general counsel of PRWT Services, Inc.

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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

## 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:

Wiley, Fletcher Houston, 1942-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hayden, Robert (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Wiley, Fletcher Houston, 1942---Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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## Occupations:

Lawyer

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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 Fletcher "Flash" Wiley, October 15, 2004 and September 11, 2019. 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 Fletcher "Flash" Wiley, Section A2004\_206\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:30 2004/10/15

Fletcher “Flash” Wiley was born on November 29, 1942 in Chicago, Illinois. His mother, Mildred Berg, was born in Chicago after her mother, while attending nursing school, was raped by a white man. Berg was allegedly kidnapped as an infant and raised in Memphis, Tennessee but reunited with her mother at the age of eighteen. She worked as a beautician. Berg met Wiley’s father, Fletcher Wiley, at Booker T. Washington High School in Memphis. He was from Holly Springs, Mississippi and became a janitor. They married and he served in World War II. They later divorced, and he remarried and had another son. Wiley was raised in the Lockefield Gardens housing project of Indianapolis, Indiana where his early memories include his maternal cousins and the sights, sounds and smells of Indiana Avenue. He attended Flanner House for kindergarten and later, he became the first African American student selected for a gifted program through the Indianapolis Public Schools. He admired local basketball player Oscar Robertson.

Video Oral History Interview with Fletcher "Flash" Wiley, Section A2004\_206\_001\_002, TRT: 0:31:02 2004/10/15

Fletcher “Flash” Wiley enjoyed studying history and first aspired to be a doctor while in the gifted child program of the Indianapolis Public School district. He attended Shortridge High School in Indianapolis, Indiana where he played basketball, football and swam in his free time. Wiley wanted to attend the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs but was denied the congressional appointment he needed. He was recruited to play football at the U.S. Naval Academy Preparatory School in Bainbridge, Maryland and after seven months there, was

able to join the Air Force Academy and become the fifth African American to graduate. Wiley studied in Paris on a Fulbright Scholarship before serving in the U.S. Air Force's Office of Special Investigation for over four years. In 1970, he entered Harvard Law School in Cambridge, Massachusetts where he founded the Harvard Law School Black Alumni Association. He remembers Boston, Massachusetts in the 1970s and meeting and marrying his wife, HistoryMaker Benaree P. Wiley.

Video Oral History Interview with Fletcher "Flash" Wiley, Section A2004\_206\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:00 2004/10/15

Fletcher "Flash" Wiley graduated from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in Cambridge in 1974. During his last two years of graduate school, he worked at Abt Associates Inc., eventually becoming a senior executive. In 1975, he began his legal career with Fine & Ambrogne and remained for three years. Wiley then practiced law on his own before joining HistoryMaker Wayne Budd and others in 1979 to form Budd, Reilly & Wiley in Boston, Massachusetts, where he practiced business law. The firm later merged with another firm to become Fitch, Wiley, Richlin & Tourse, one of the largest African American owned law firms in the U.S. After its dissolution, he practiced with Goldstein & Manello before joining PRWT Services, Inc.'s Boston office and entering the business sector in 1996. Wiley describes the history of PRWT and his work there. He also talks about his involvement in many organizations, the Crispus Attucks Children's Center and his family. Wiley sings 'Save the Last Dance for Me'.

Video Oral History Interview with Fletcher "Flash" Wiley, Section A2004\_206\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:20 2004/10/15

Fletcher "Flash" Wiley got his nickname, Flash, while playing football at the U.S. Naval Academy Preparatory School in Bainbridge, Maryland. He talks about his love and appreciation for his wife, HistoryMaker Benaree P. Wiley. In reflecting on his life, Wiley recites a poem he first wrote as a student at Shortridge High School in Indianapolis, Indiana; around his fiftieth birthday, he added more stanzas to the poem that reflect what he learned about life in the intervening years. He describes

his plans to write in the future. He talks about the importance of the U.S. military's desegregation and inclusiveness and the opportunities it affords all people. Wiley describes his hopes for the African American community, how he would like to be remembered and narrates his photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Fletcher "Flash" Wiley, Section A2004\_206\_002\_005, TRT: 5:29:07 2019/09/11

Video Oral History Interview with Fletcher "Flash" Wiley, Section A2004\_206\_002\_006, TRT: 6:28:59 2019/09/11

Video Oral History Interview with Fletcher "Flash" Wiley, Section A2004\_206\_002\_007, TRT: 7:28:56 2019/09/11

Video Oral History Interview with Fletcher "Flash" Wiley, Section A2004\_206\_002\_008, TRT: 8:28:56 2019/09/11

Video Oral History Interview with Fletcher "Flash" Wiley, Section A2004\_206\_002\_009, TRT: 9:30:46 2019/09/11

Video Oral History Interview with Fletcher "Flash" Wiley, Section A2004\_206\_002\_010, TRT: 10:29:20 2019/09/11

Video Oral History Interview with Fletcher "Flash" Wiley, Section A2004\_206\_002\_011, TRT: 11:31:24 2019/09/11

Video Oral History Interview with Fletcher "Flash" Wiley, Section A2004\_206\_002\_012, TRT: 12:29:50 2019/09/11

Video Oral History Interview with Fletcher "Flash" Wiley, Section A2004\_206\_002\_013, TRT: 13:28:34 2019/09/11

Video Oral History Interview with Fletcher "Flash" Wiley, Section A2004\_206\_002\_014, TRT: 14:31:14 2019/09/11