

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with George Cylie Fraser

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Fraser, George C.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with George Cylie Fraser,
Dates:	January 11, 2005 and March 18, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:52:30).
Abstract:	Business networking chief executive George Cylie Fraser (1945 -) spent seventeen years in management with Proctor & Gamble, The United Way and the Ford Motor Company. He was also the author of three guides to networking and business in the African American community. Fraser was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 11, 2005 and March 18, 2005, in Cleveland, Ohio and Pepper Pike, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_009
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Entrepreneur, author, and motivational speaker George Fraser was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1945. One of eight children born to Ida Mae Baldwin and Walter Frederick Fraser, he graduated from the Thomas Edison Vocational High School, attended New York University and received his executive training at Dartmouth College's Amos and Tuck School of Business.

Fraser spent seventeen years in management with Proctor & Gamble, the United Way and the Ford Motor Company. He wrote his first book, bestseller *Success Runs in Our Race: The Complete Guide to Effective Networking in the African Community*, in 1994. His second book, *Race for Success: The Ten Best Business Opportunities for Blacks in America*, was selected as one of the ten best business books of 1999 by *Booklist* magazine. He is also the creator and publisher of the award winning *SuccessGuide: The Networking Guide to Black Resources*. Twenty versions of *SuccessGuide* have been published and a worldwide edition was released in August 2000.

Fraser has received many awards and citations for his community service, including the United Negro College Fund National Volunteer of the Year Award and an Architects of the Village Award from Allstate Insurance. He is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records. In 1986, as director of marketing and communications for the United Way of Cleveland, he conceived, planned and led the release of 1.4 million balloons, the largest single balloon release in history.

The publication *Vital Speeches of the Day* has selected three of Mr. Fraser's speeches to be reprinted and distributed worldwide, a first for any professional speaker in America.

He has been featured in articles in *Black Enterprise* and *Upscale* magazines.

Fraser and his wife, Nora Jean (née Spencer), are the parents of two sons.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with George Cylie Fraser was conducted by Regennia Williams on January 11, 2005 and March 18, 2005, in Cleveland, Ohio and Pepper Pike, Ohio, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Business networking chief executive George Cylie Fraser (1945 -) spent seventeen years in management with Proctor & Gamble, The United Way and the Ford Motor Company. He was also the author of three guides to networking and business in the African American community.

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:

Fraser, George C.

Williams, Regennia (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Fraser, George C.--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Business Networking Chief Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

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 George Cylie Fraser, January 11, 2005 and March 18, 2005. 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 George Cylie Fraser, Section A2005_009_001_001, TRT: 0:31:00 ?

George Cylie Fraser was born on May 1, 1945 in Brooklyn, New York. His

paternal family is of Guyanese heritage and his father, Walter Frederick Fraser, was born in Georgetown, Guyana. Fraser's father migrated to New York City in the early 1900s after serving in the British Navy. His mother, Ida Mae Baldwin Fraser, was born in Lumpkin, Georgia. She was institutionalized when Fraser was five years old. Fraser's father worked demanding hours as a taxi driver, and his six children were placed in an orphanage which separated Fraser and his siblings in foster care. Fraser describes growing up in a foster home with only two of his siblings, Emma and Joseph Fraser. The children reunited as teenagers, and moved into their father's home in Brooklyn, New York. Fraser describes developing a relationship with his brothers and running a disco with them in the city. He remembers his elementary school experiences and his third grade teacher, Mrs. Lambert, who cultivated his interests in reading and writing.

Video Oral History Interview with George Cylie Fraser, Section A2005_009_001_002, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

George Cylie Fraser describes growing up in the 1950s and 1960s in Brooklyn, New York. He attended Thomas Edison Vocational High School in New York City and majored in cabinetmaking. Fraser was an average student, but his counselor threatened to expel him for poor academic performance. He talks about his father's personality and the impact of his mother's institutionalization. After graduating in 1963, Fraser went to work at his half-brother's printing press, Satellite Lithography. There, Fraser became interested in entrepreneurship. Fraser left the printing press for a position at LaGuardia Airport in Queens, New York. He enrolled in courses at New York University in New York City, but dropped out after a short period. Fraser remembers influential figures in the Civil Rights Movement. He talks about racial identity and W.E.B. DuBois' theory of double consciousness. He also talks about his childhood entrepreneurial activities and how he and his brothers avoided the Vietnam War draft.

Video Oral History Interview with George Cylie Fraser, Section A2005_009_001_003, TRT: 0:28:10 ?

George Cylie Fraser describes the psychological and physical impact of the Vietnam War on his friends. In the mid-1960s, he moved from New York to Cleveland, Ohio where his half-sister lived. In Cleveland, Fraser worked in the laundry department of the Cleveland Clinic and Halle Brothers department store before becoming a salesman for Encyclopedia Britannica. The job inspired him to open his own storefront, Black Education Development, selling collections of African American historical literature. He was then accepted into the Procter & Gamble (P&G) marketing and sales training program and later became P&G's manager of health and beauty in the northeast. During that time, he also volunteered at the United Negro College Fund. Fraser describes his social life in the 1970s. He worked for United Way before joining the Ford Motor Company in 1987 where he developed SuccessNet, a networking conference for black entrepreneurs. He talks about SuccessNet's initial success and eventual bankruptcy in the mid-1990s.

Video Oral History Interview with George Cylie Fraser, Section A2005_009_002_004, TRT: 0:28:55 ?

George Cylie Fraser wrote his first bestselling book, 'Success Runs in Our Race,' in 1994. The work chronicled his experiences in entrepreneurship. However, his networking event company, SuccessNet, collapsed in 1996. Fraser reflects upon factors behind the collapse and the lessons he learned. After declaring bankruptcy, SuccessNet underwent largescale downsizing and infrastructure remodeling. Fraser then wrote his second book, 'Race for

Success,' and entered the lecture circuit to generate cash flow for rebuilding his business. His bankruptcy was very public and the story made headlines in Ohio's largest newspaper, The Plain Dealer. Fraser talks about the popularity of his speaking engagements, why he thinks his message is appealing, and his audience demographic. He also critiques the changes within the American economy since 2000. In 2005, Fraser appeared on the State of the Black Union with HistoryMaker Tavis Smiley. At the time of interview, he was working on a third book, 'Connecting with People.'

Video Oral History Interview with George Cylie Fraser, Section A2005_009_002_005, TRT: 0:29:57 ?

George Cylie Fraser talks about his philosophy on economic empowerment and wealth building in the African American community. In 2005, Fraser was featured on HistoryMaker Tavis Smiley's, 'State of the Black Union,' an annual symposium on actions to improve the experience of black people in America. Panel members included HistoryMakers Minister Louis Farrakhan, Reverend Al Sharpton, and Reverend Jesse Jackson. Fraser describes his experience as a panel member and the content of his message from that evening. He also talks about facilitating upward mobility within the African American community and economic accountability, critiquing the economic state of the African Americans, and suggesting business models for economic growth. Fraser talks about his marriage to Nora Jean Fraser and maintaining a work-life balance.

Video Oral History Interview with George Cylie Fraser, Section A2005_009_002_006, TRT: 0:25:48 ?

George Cylie Fraser talks about his marriage to Nora Jean Fraser. Both of his sons, George C. Fraser II and Scott Fraser, are involved in the FraserNet business. Fraser talks about learning to balance business and personal relationships with his children. He describes his optimism for future of the African American community, his legacy, and the value of networking within the black community. Fraser concludes his interview by narrating his photographs.