

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Paul Mason

---

## 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>	Mason, Paul, 1955-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Paul Mason,
<b>Dates:</b>	February 4, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:14:32).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Journalism professor, media executive, and television news producer Paul Mason (1955 - ) was the senior vice president of ABC News and served as a professor of journalism at the University of California, Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism. Mason was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 4, 2005, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_038
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Paul Stanley Mason was born on September 14, 1955, in Cleveland, Ohio. Mason's mother worked as a social worker and his father, a former Tuskegee Airman, was a dentist; his was the first black family in the Shaker Heights community where he grew up. In 1973, as senior class president, Mason graduated from Shaker Heights High School, where he played football and baseball and sang for the choir.

Mason attended Wesleyan University, earning his B.A. degree in classical civilization in 1977. During his senior year, Mason spent a semester studying abroad in Italy. Mason taught high school English at Friends Academy, where he also coached the basketball and football teams. Mason earned his masters degree from the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University in 1981; that same year, he received a fellowship to study the race riots in London, England. This assignment helped Mason land his first job with ABC News, working on the assignment desk and as an off-air reporter for the network.

After serving as operations producer for *Good Morning America*, Mason joined the Miami bureau of ABC in 1986, working as a field producer. In 1989, Mason was assigned to *World News Tonight* and later became the Miami-based producer for ABC News *Primetime Live*. In 1998, Mason joined the faculty at the University of California at Berkeley, teaching at the Graduate School of Journalism while continuing to produce segments for *20/20* and *Primetime Live*. Mason then went on to serve as executive producer of Monday editions of *Primetime Live* and executive producer of *World News Tonight Saturday and Sunday*. In the latter capacity, Mason was responsible for the editorial content and production of the weekend evening news broadcasts.

In 2004, Mason was promoted to senior vice president of ABC News with day-to-day responsibility for *Nightline*, *This Week*, *ABC News Radio*, *World News Now*, *World News This Morning* and *Good Morning America*'s news inserts. Additionally, Mason oversaw the network's coverage of both political conventions and general elections.

Mason has received numerous awards and honors, including an NAACP Image Award and several Emmy

nominations.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Paul Mason was conducted by Racine Tucker Hamilton on February 4, 2005, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Journalism professor, media executive, and television news producer Paul Mason (1955 - ) was the senior vice president of ABC News and served as a professor of journalism at the University of California, Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism.

---

## 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:

Mason, Paul, 1955-

Hamilton, Racine Tucker (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Mason, Paul, 1955---Interviews

---

African American television producers and directors--Interviews

---

African American television journalists--Interviews

Journalism teachers--Interviews

---

African American executives--Interviews

---

## **Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

University of California, Berkeley. Graduate School of Journalism

---

ABC News

---

## **Occupations:**

Journalism Professor

---

Media Executive

---

Television News Producer

---

## **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 Paul Mason, February 4, 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 Paul Mason, Section A2005\_038\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:29 ?

Paul Mason was born on September 14, 1955 in Cleveland, Ohio. His mother Beverly Sinkford Mason was born in Bluefield Virginia to Stanly Sinkford and Marjorie Adams Sinkford. She received her master's degree in social work from Case Western Reserve University, eventually becoming a social worker for Shaker Heights School District. She lived with her grandparents, who owned a successful undertaker business. His father Theodore Mason, was born in Cadiz, Ohio to Noble Mason and Mable Fullum Mason. Mason's paternal family was working class, and his grandfather worked as an electrician in the coal mines and on the railroad. Mason's father was a Tuskegee Airman in the 477 Bombardment group. He earned a football scholarship to play for Case Western where he also attended dental school. Mason talks about big holiday parties with his family. He also tells the story of his parents' work in buying a house on an all-white street in Shaker Heights.

African American television producers and directors--Interviews.

African American television journalists--Interviews.

Journalism teachers--Interviews.

African American executives--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Paul Mason, Section A2005\_038\_001\_002, TRT: 0:31:25 ?

Paul Mason grew up in Shaker Heights, Ohio, a community that became deliberately evenly segregated in the early 1960s. His elementary school was idyllic, and he had several good teachers. Mason was sent home early from school in 1963 following President John F. Kennedy's assassination. In elementary school, Mason excelled academically and in sports and wanted to be a doctor and professional football player. He and his father would often watch the Cleveland Browns, and he saw the 1964 championship win with his family. Mason's family attended the St. James A.M.E. Church in Cleveland, but moved to a suburban Methodist church in the '60s. After the pastor did not respond following Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s death, Mason's father stopped attending, but the rest of the family would occasionally go, mostly for the basketball team. Junior High was more difficult for Mason, as it included several previously segregated schools, but his skills in sports and academics allowed him to excel.

Video Oral History Interview with Paul Mason, Section A2005\_038\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:31 ?

Paul Mason's time in junior high was complicated by rising Black Nationalism as learned to figure out his identity and political place. He graduated from high school in 1973 then went on to Wesleyan University. There, he chose to focus on academics over football, and had to reconsider his personal and racial identity as well as his ideals. Mason majored in Classics, and a semester abroad in Italy opened up how he viewed the world. After college, he spent two years teaching

high school English at Friends Academy in New York then went on to journalism school at Columbia University. There, he shifted his focus from print to broadcast journalism and lead a weekly TV news show. Upon graduation, Mason received a grant from the university to cover the race riots in England. While there, he began to work at ABC News on the weekends at the assignment desk. While there, he caught news of the Toxeth Riots in Liverpool on the wires and quickly left to cover it. This story got him hired by ABC News.

Video Oral History Interview with Paul Mason, Section A2005\_038\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:48 ?

Paul Mason quit working for ABC once the news turned from the race riots to the royal wedding. He went home, but was later sought out, and re-hired as an off-air reporter. In this position, he worked with others in the company, including George Strait and Claudia Pryor, to increase diversity at the network. He worked as a reporter, producer, and researcher until breaking into magazine format television with 'Primetime Live.' His first episode won an Emmy and covered the effects of industrial revolution in the Rio Grande Valley. While working on the show, he also produced "Judgement at Midnight" and "Black and White in America." In 1997, Mason began teaching at University of California, Berkeley, where he worked with students to learn about emerging digital equipment. Mason also discussing the difficulties arising from the increasing commercialization of the network TV and news.

Video Oral History Interview with Paul Mason, Section A2005\_038\_001\_005, TRT: 0:11:19 ?

Paul Mason became Senior Vice President of News at ABC after teaching at Berkeley. He was the executive in charge of 'Nightline' and 'This Week' and used his position to feature speakers such as Kweisi Mfume and Tavis Smiley. Mason talks about changes in black representation in media and what still must be done. He reflects upon his life; looks forward to what is next; and considers his legacy.