Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Melvin Hart

Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616
info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com

Creator: Hart, Melvin

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Melvin Hart,

Dates: July 14, 2005

Bulk Dates: 2005

Physical Description: 3 Betacam SP videocassettes (1:24:50).

Abstract: Marketing executive and newspaper publishing executive Melvin Hart (1952 - ) was the manager and director of marketing for the Black Media Group as well as publisher of South Carolina's weekly African American newspaper, Black News. Hart was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 14, 2005 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

Identification: A2005_164

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Marketing executive and newspaper publishing executive Melvin Hart was born on January 7, 1952 to Cleola Kimpson Hart, a homemaker and Furman “Toot” Hart. Furman is a World War II veteran, former member of the Civilian Conservation Corps and one of the founders of the local branch of the NAACP in St. Matthews, South Carolina. Hart attended Guinyard, a segregated African American elementary school. When he reached the eighth grade, Hart became one of a small group of African American students to integrate Saint Matthews High School. In 1970, Hart was one of five African Americans, out of a class of approximately seventy-five students, to graduate from St. Matthews.

Hart was the Senior Vice President of Marketing and Advertising for South Carolina Black Media Group, publisher of Columbia, South Carolina's African American newspaper, "Black News." As manager and director of marketing at the organization, Hart worked to ensure that the information needs of the African American population in South Carolina were met. Black News, a weekly publication, serves South Carolina’s forty-six counties, including rural, suburban and metropolitan areas.

Active in his church and community, Hart was re-appointed to the Historic Columbia Foundation Board of Trustees for 2005 and 2006, his second term.

Melvin Hart was interviewed by the HistoryMakers on July 14, 2005

Scope and Content
This life oral history interview with Melvin Hart was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 14, 2005, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and was recorded on 3 Betacam SP videocassettes. Marketing executive and newspaper publishing executive Melvin Hart (1952 - ) was the manager and director of marketing for the Black Media Group as well as publisher of South Carolina's weekly African American newspaper, Black News.

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:

Melvin Hart.
Crowe, Larry (Interviewer).
Stearns, Scott (Videographer).

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews.
Melvin Hart--Interviews.

African American businesspeople--Interviews.

African American executives--Interviews.

African Americans in the newspaper industry--Interviews.
Organizations:

- HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)
- The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection
- Black Media Group
- Black News

HistoryMakers® Category:

- BusinessMakers
- EducationMakers
- 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


Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 8/25/2011 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
Melvin Hart slates the interview and lists his favorites. He provides information about his parents, Cleola Kimpson Hart and Furman “Toot” Hart, who both were raised and lived in St. Matthews, South Carolina. The Kimpsons and the Harts were both farmers, who had their own land and sometimes would work on other people’s land. Furman was a U.S. Army soldier in World War II and after he returned from the war, he joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the late 1940s, where he and other men helped to construct the Savannah River Plant in Aiken, South Carolina. After construction he worked at the plant. He stayed there for twenty-five years commuting between St. Matthews and the plant. Hart notes that although he has no memory of either his paternal or maternal grandparents their legacy of being hardworking, honest and keeping one’s word was passed on to him.

African American families--South Carolina--Saint Matthews.

Savannah River Site (S.C.).

Civilian Conservation Corps (U.S.).

Savannah River Plant (E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company).

Aiken (S.C.).

Melvin Hart discusses his early childhood memory of how he first attended kindergarten in St. Matthews, as well as his elementary school experience at Guinyard Elementary. He talks about how he came to be one of the students that helped to integrate Calhoun County School District in South Carolina. Hart attended St. Matthews High School as opposed to the African American school, John Ford High School. He provides information about the extracurricular and community activities that he, his friends and neighborhood children and teenagers participated in. In addition, he talks about the demographic and social atmosphere of the community. Although the Harts lived in town and were considered townspeople, their friends came from both the town and the rural part of the county. Hart notes that to supplement the family income he and his siblings had to cut firewood for both themselves and for the community.

African American families--South Carolina--Saint Matthews.

African Americans--South Carolina--Saint Matthews--Social life and customs.

African Americans--Education (Elementary).

African Americans--Education (Secondary).

School Integration--South Carolina--Saint Matthews.

African American children--South Carolina--Saint Matthews.

African American children--South Carolina--Saint Matthews--Social life and customs.

Fuelwood cutting.

Child labor.

Melvin Hart recalls that he enjoyed most of his teachers at Guinyard Elementary and that his teachers there were all African American. However, when he went to St. Matthews High School in St. Matthews, South Carolina in
1965, all of his teachers were Caucasian. Thus, the school was integrating the student body, but not the staff, as the only African American adults in the school were the cooks and janitors. Hart recounts the negative and positive experiences he had in school. He talks about the struggle and resistance that his father, Furman, experienced when he said that he was going to enroll his sons (Hart and his younger brother) at St. Matthews. Hart attributes his dad’s fortitude to his previous involvement with civil rights organizations and leaders on both a national and state level. He graduated from St. Matthews in 1970.

African Americans--Education (Elementary).
African Americans--Education (Secondary).
School Integration--South Carolina--Saint Matthews.
African Americans--Race relations.
Civil rights movement--South Carolina--Saint Matthews.
African American teachers.