

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lez Edmond

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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>	Edmond, Lez
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Lez Edmond,
<b>Dates:</b>	October 10, 2006
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2006
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:21:11).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Civil rights activist and psychology professor Lez Edmond (1932 - 2017 ) was known for his writings on the Civil Rights Movement in Harlem in the 1960s, where he worked with Malcolm X and other leaders. He was associate professor of Psychology and the Social Sciences at the College of Professional Studies at St. John's University. Edmond was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 10, 2006, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2006_110
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civil rights activist Lez Edmond was born in Jacksonville, Florida. He was on the faculty of one of America's leading Catholic institutions of higher learning, St. John's University in New York City. As a child, Edmond attended a Seventh Day Adventist school, where he received his high school diploma. Edmond continued his education and received his B.A. degree and his M.A. degree from Adelphi University. He then received his PhD degree from the Union Institute in Cincinnati, Ohio.

In 1962, Edmond co-authored with Earl Sweeting *African History: An Illustrated Handbook*, presenting the accomplishments of the continent of Africa and its people. In 1964, Edmond wrote the *Harlem Diary*, chronicling his thoughts and observances about Harlem's 1964 race riot. Harlem Diary appeared in the Catholic magazine, *Ramparts*, and was reprinted in *Reporting Civil Rights: American Journalism*. By the late 1960s, Edmond had become a known civil rights activist in Harlem. He worked closely with several civil rights leaders including Malcolm X, who invited him to attend meetings at the Nation of Islam.

Edmond began his professional career in research and development at Radio Engineering Lab in Long Island, New York. Joining Seton Hall University, Edmond began his teaching career. He continued his studies with psychologist Carl Rogers before joining St. John's University as an associate professor of Psychology and the Social Sciences at the school's College of Professional Studies. Edmond was the recipient of the Spirit of St. John's Award.

Edmond lived in New York City.

Edmond passed away in April 2017.

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# Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Lez Edmond was conducted by Shawn Wilson on October 10, 2006, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civil rights activist and psychology professor Lez Edmond (1932 - 2017 ) was known for his writings on the Civil Rights Movement in Harlem in the 1960s, where he worked with Malcolm X and other leaders. He was associate professor of Psychology and the Social Sciences at the College of Professional Studies at St. John's University.

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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:

Edmond, Lez

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Edmond, Lez--Interviews

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African American civil rights workers--New York (State)--New York--Harlem--Interviews

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African American college teachers--New York (State)--New York--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:

Civil Rights Activist

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# HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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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 Lez Edmond, October 10, 2006. 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 Lez Edmond, Section A2006\_110\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:10 ?  
Lez Edmond was born on May 9, 1932 in Jacksonville, Florida to Ruth McArthur. Edmond's mother was the youngest of thirteen children born to

Roxie McArthur and William McArthur, who was a lineman on the railroad, and farmed through his retirement. Edmond's mother only saw her grandfather during the community's annual Jubilee festivals in celebration of emancipation. Edmond's maternal uncle, Ali McArthur, fled to Harlem after defending himself from white men. Edmond and his sister visited him each summer, and went to the Apollo Theater to see singers like Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday. Edmond's paternal grandfather was a Pullman porter, while Edmond's father and other family members were small business owners in Jacksonville. Edmond frequented his uncle's barber shop on Ashley Street, where he was mentored by the men of the community, and met musician Cootie Williams. Edmond's family kept him from going to downtown Jacksonville, so he lived in a community that was almost entirely African American.

African American civil rights workers--New York (State)--New York--Interviews.

African American college teachers--New York (State)--New York--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Lez Edmond, Section A2006\_110\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:39 ?

Lez Edmond met popular musicians like Kenny Dorham through his uncles, one of whom was Ali McArthur, a boxer in New York City's Harlem neighborhood. Edmond also enjoyed watching Negro League baseball players like Josh Gibson and Satchel Paige. In Jacksonville, Florida, he attended a Seventh-day Adventist church and school in a mixed grade classroom. In Sunday school, Edmond was taught that the African race was cursed because they descended from Noah's son, Ham. However, his view of this changed after meeting African National Memorial Bookstore owner Lewis H. Michaux, who gave Edmond a copy of Joseph Lewis' 'The Bible Unmasked.' While Edmond was aware of lynchings in the South, and was taunted with racial epithets by teenagers in Florida, he did not encounter physical racial violence himself until living in New York City years later. There, he experienced the riots of 1964 while working as an advisor to Malcolm X with Omar Ahmed and Herman Ferguson.

Video Oral History Interview with Lez Edmond, Section A2006\_110\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:42 ?

Lez Edmond's family moved to Queens, New York when he was a teenager and spent much of his time in bookstores. At Richard B. Moore's Frederick Douglass Book Center, Edmond saw speakers like John G. Jackson, Elliott Skinner and John Henrik Clark. At Lewis H. Michaux's African National Memorial Bookstore, Edmond met activists and leaders like Dick Gregory and boxer Muhammad Ali, often through the store's employee, Helen E. Brown. There, Edmond first met Malcolm X. Edmond was an advisor to Malcolm X as a member of the Organization of Afro-American Unity. Edmond also befriended Andrew Kurtisz, who distributed Marxist texts. Edmond became active in New York City's Civil Rights Movement, while also studying business at Adelphi University in Garden City, New York. Although he paid tuition as a freshman, his high grades enabled him to obtain a scholarship for the following years. Upon graduation, Edmond was hired by Radio Engineering Laboratories, Inc. where he built and repaired radios.

Video Oral History Interview with Lez Edmond, Section A2006\_110\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:16 ?

Lez Edmond learned of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy's assassination two hours before it was publicly announced, through a military transmission he picked up on a radio at Radio Engineering Laboratories, Inc. There, he clashed with a white South African coworker who supported apartheid. Edmond continued to work in electronics, and also served as a Freedom Now Party coordinator in 1964. That year, Edmond noticed mounting tensions between citizens and police in New York City's Harlem. When riots broke out, Edmond

and Omar Ahmed, another associate of Malcolm X, documented the violence via tape recorder. Attorney Conrad Lynn asked Edmond to write about the riots in an article, 'Harlem Diary: The Untold Story of the American Nightmare,' in Ramparts magazine. Edmonds later decided to leave the electronics industry after seeing the missiles at Florida's Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, and realizing his work would be used to kill people. Instead, he pursued a career in teaching.

Video Oral History Interview with Lez Edmond, Section A2006\_110\_001\_005, TRT: 0:30:03 ?

Lez Edmond left the technology industry because of his opposition to the Vietnam War. He was influenced by Malcolm X's lessons about violence, greed and religion. Instead, Edmond became a teacher, and was hired by Judith Miller and Charshee McIntyre at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey. After Edmond's writing was published in Rampart magazine, he turned down job offers from Life magazine and from Howard B. Woods, who asked him to join the United States Information Agency while they were on a flight to the First World Festival of Black Arts in Dakar, Senegal in 1966. Edmond was later recruited to the faculty of St. John's University by a student of psychologist Carl Rogers, under whom Edmond had studied. There, Edmond held regular dinners with Deborah Squire, historian John Henrik Clarke and his wife Sybil Williams Clarke. They helped Edmond develop a curriculum when the school's president, Joseph T. Cahill, assigned him to teach a course on Western civilization.

Video Oral History Interview with Lez Edmond, Section A2006\_110\_001\_006, TRT: 0:31:03 ?

Lez Edmond earned a master's degree in education upon the recommendation of Dr. Ruth Muller, who heard him speak in New York City's Harlem neighborhood. Later, Edmond began studying psychology at the suggestion of a colleague's husband. Edmond's friend Sylvia Gaines introduced to him psychologist Carl Rogers, who studied psychic phenomena like out of body experiences. Edmond was invited into Rogers' inner circle after he shared having a similar experience in Dakar, Senegal. In the late 1960s, Edmond worked as a writer and consultant for Italian filmmaker Michelangelo Antonioni, who was working in New York and in the Western United States. In Arizona, Edmond encountered racial discrimination at a hotel. Edmond reflects upon his career, and his lifelong friendship with bookstore owner Lewis H. Michaux, who often gave Edmond advice and reading material. He also talks about the teachings of the Christian Bible, and tensions between African Americans and Jewish people.

Video Oral History Interview with Lez Edmond, Section A2006\_110\_001\_007, TRT: 0:20:18 ?

Lez Edmond served as a consultant Italian filmmaker Michelangelo Antonioni in 1966, while working on 'Zabriskie Point,' a film about the counterculture of the 1960s. Edmond also talks about his family, including the death of his son and his divorce from his wife. His also talks about his daughter, LezAnne Edmond's recommending that he work closer to home and how that influenced his decision to leave his teaching position at St. John's University in Queens, New York. Edmond reflects upon his life, and concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.