

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Gen. Colin L. Powell

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Powell, Colin L.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Gen. Colin L. Powell,
Dates:	April 29, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	Betacame SP videocassettes ().
Abstract:	Military officer, cabinet appointee, and presidential appointee Gen. Colin L. Powell (1937 - 2021) served as the 65th Secretary of State, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and National Security Advisor. Powell, a four-star general in the U.S. Army, is also the founding Chairman of America's Promise – The Alliance for Youth. Powell was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 29, 2006, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_186
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

General Colin L. Powell, USA (Ret.) became the 65th Secretary of State on January 20, 2001. As he stated at his confirmation hearing, the guiding principle of U.S. foreign policy during his tenure was that “America stands ready to help any country that wishes to join the democratic world.”

Powell brought extensive experience with him to his office. Before becoming Secretary of State, he served as a key aide to the Secretary of Defense and as National Security Advisor to President Reagan. He also served thirty-five years in the United States Army, rising to the rank of Four-Star General and serving as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1989 to 1993). During this time, he oversaw twenty-eight crises including the Panama intervention of 1989 and Operation Desert Storm in the victorious 1991 Persian Gulf War.

That experience served him well, both before and particularly after the events of September 11, 2001, the day of the greatest tragedy on American soil since Pearl Harbor. As Secretary, he stood shoulder to shoulder with the President and the other members of the President's cabinet in fighting the war on terrorism. As he often said, “winning that war is our first priority, and it will remain so for as long as necessary.”

A fervent purveyor of democratic values, Powell stressed that fighting the war on terrorism is not just a military but also a diplomatic task – the two go hand in hand. He led the State Department in major efforts to solve regional and civil conflicts – in the Middle East, between Israel and its Arab neighbors; in Sudan, Congo and Liberia; in the Balkans, Cyprus, Haiti, Northern Ireland and elsewhere. He was especially concerned with the peace and security of Afghanistan and Iraq, countries where winning the peace is as important as Coalition battlefield victories. In all areas, he used the power of diplomacy and the universal ideal of democracy to build trust, forge alliances and then begin to transform these once unstable regions into areas where societies and cultures prosper.

Powell was devoted to grasping opportunities as well as to confronting the global and regional security challenges

of the 21st century. He was at the forefront of the administration's efforts to advance economic and social development worldwide – in the fight against HIV/AIDS, in the promise of the Millennium Challenge Account, the most significant change in helping needy nations since the Marshall Plan, and in pursuing a freer trading and investment climate worldwide. These efforts, too, are not separate from the nation's security agenda. Indeed, in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, then Secretary Powell affirmed that our main purpose is to extend democracy, prosperity, and freedom to every corner of the world. It is a process that is establishing a balance of power that favors freedom across the globe.

Born in New York City on April 5, 1937, Powell was raised in the South Bronx. His parents, Luther and Maud Powell, immigrated to the United States from Jamaica. Powell was educated in New York City public schools, graduating from Morris High School and the City College of New York (CCNY), where he earned his bachelor's degree in geology. He also participated in ROTC at CCNY and received a commission as an Army second lieutenant upon graduation in June 1958. His further academic achievements include a M.B.A. degree from George Washington University.

Powell is the recipient of numerous U.S. military awards and decorations including the Defense Distinguished Service Medal (with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters), the Army Distinguished Service Medal (with Oak Leaf Cluster), Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit (with Oak Leaf Cluster), Soldier's Medal, Bronze Star Medal, and the Purple Heart.

Powell's civilian awards include two Presidential Medals of Freedom, the President's Citizens Medal, the Congressional Gold Medal and the Secretary of Energy Distinguished Service Medal. Over two dozen countries have bestowed awards on him, including a French Legion of Honor and an honorary knighthood bestowed by H.M. Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain.

Powell was the founding Chairman of America's Promise – The Alliance for Youth, a national crusade to improve the lives of our nation's youth. Established at the Presidents' Summit for America's Future in Philadelphia in April of 1997, and endorsed by every living U.S. President, America's Promise aims to ensure all children in America have access to the fundamental resources needed to build and strengthen them to become responsible, productive adults. He has also been a member of the Board of Trustees of Howard University and the Board of Directors of the United Negro College Fund. Powell also served on the Board of Governors of The Boys & Girls Clubs of America and was a member of the Advisory Board of the Children's Health Fund.

Since returning to private life, Powell has become a strategic limited partner at Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, the renowned Silicon Valley venture capital firm. He is also on the Board of Directors of Revolution Health Care, a company developing strategies for consumer-directed health care. Powell is the Founder of the Colin Powell Policy Center at his alma mater, the City College of New York, and he is helping to raise funds for the Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial in Washington, D.C. and for the construction of an education center for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Powell was the author of his best-selling autobiography, *My American Journey*.

Powell was married to the former Alma Vivian Johnson of Birmingham, Alabama. The Powell family includes son Michael; daughters, Linda and Annemarie; daughter-in-law Jane, and grandchildren Jeffrey, Bryan and Abigail.

Powell passed away on October 18, 2021.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Gen. Colin L. Powell was conducted by Juan Williams on April 29, 2006, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on Betacame SP videocassettes. Military officer, cabinet appointee, and presidential appointee Gen. Colin L. Powell (1937 - 2021) served as the 65th Secretary of State, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and National Security Advisor. Powell, a four-star general in the U.S. Army,

is also the founding Chairman of America's Promise – The Alliance for Youth.

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:

Powell, Colin L.

Williams, Juan (Interviewer)

N/A (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Powell, Colin L.--Interviews

African American generals--Interviews

African American government executives--Interviews

Cabinet officers--United States--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States. Army.

United States. Dept. of State

Occupations:

Military Officer

U.S. Cabinet Official

HistoryMakers® Category:

MilitaryMakers|PoliticalMakers

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 Gen. Colin L. Powell, April 29, 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).

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 Gen. Colin L. Powell, Section
A2006_186_COLIN_POWELL_06_MED_001, TRT: 1:30:00

This tape contains an 2001 SCTN Teleproduction recording of speakers at the American Bookseller's Association. The speakers are Studs Terkel, Dorothy Allison, Colin Powell, and Hilary Clinton. Powell talks about his upcoming book, My American Journey.