

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Walter C. Carrington

Overview of the Collection

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Repository: | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com |
| Creator: | Carrington, Walter C. |
| Title: | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Walter C. Carrington, |
| Dates: | February 14, 2007 |
| Bulk Dates: | 2007 |
| Physical Description: | 9 Betacame SP videocassettes (4:30:38). |
| Abstract: | Lawyer and foreign ambassador The Honorable Walter C. Carrington (1930 - 2020) was the former U.S. ambassador to Senegal and Nigeria. Carrington was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 14, 2007, in Newton, Massachusetts. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| Identification: | A2007_069 |
| Language: | The interview and records are in English. |

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Ambassador Walter Charles Carrington was born on July 24, 1930, in New York City to Marjorie Irene Hayes and Walter R. Carrington, an immigrant from Barbados. Raised in a predominately Italian-Irish community, Carrington attended Hancock School and Hale School in Everett, Massachusetts. Carrington was elected vice president of his class throughout his four years at the predominantly white Parlin Junior High and Everett High School. Graduating in 1948, Carrington became one of four black students at Harvard University; there, he founded the first Harvard chapter of the NAACP. Attending the NAACP National Convention in 1950, Carrington met Clarence Mitchell and Thurgood Marshall. In 1952, Carrington was elected the NAACP Youth Council delegate to Senegal, French West Africa. That same year, Carrington graduated from Harvard University, and as Alpha Phi Alpha Big Brother, met Martin Luther King, Jr., then at Boston University. He attended the 1954 World Assembly of Youth in Singapore and met Indian activist Vinoba Bhave. Carrington was also vice chair of Students for Stevenson. Entering the United States Army in 1955, Carrington served as a clerk typist in Germany; after the service, he enrolled in Harvard Law School, earning his J.D. degree in 1958.

At age 27, Carrington was appointed commissioner of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination; after a year, he entered into practice with the law firm of Naples, Carrington and Ruland. Carrington organized for John F. Kennedy in 1960 and from 1961 to 1971 served in the Peace Corps, eventually becoming the Peace Corps director of Africa. Carrington then served as executive vice president of the African American Institute from 1971 to 1979 and was also a member of Africare. In 1980, Carrington served President Jimmy Carter as Ambassador to Senegal. In 1981, Carrington was named director of the Department of International Affairs at Howard University. He also taught at Marquette University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Washington College and from 1990 to 1991 acted as a consultant at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

In 1993, President Clinton appointed Carrington Ambassador to Nigeria where he opposed the abuses of President Sani Abacha. From 1997 to 1998, and again in 1999, Carrington worked as a fellow of Harvard University's

W.E.B. DuBois Institute. He was also a MacArthur Fellow in 1998. In 2004, Carrington was named the first African American Warburg Professor of International Relations at Simmons College in Boston.

Carrington passed away on August 11, 2020.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Walter C. Carrington was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 14, 2007, in Newton, Massachusetts, and was recorded on 9 Betacame SP videocassettes. Lawyer and foreign ambassador The Honorable Walter C. Carrington (1930 - 2020) was the former U.S. ambassador to Senegal and Nigeria.

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:

Carrington, Walter C.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Carrington, Walter C.--Interviews

African American politicians--Interviews

Ambassadors--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States. Dept. of State

Occupations:

Ambassador

HistoryMakers® Category:

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 The Honorable Walter C. Carrington, February 14, 2007. 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 The Honorable Walter C. Carrington, Section A2007_069_001_001, TRT: 0:29:12 ?

The Honorable Walter C. Carrington was born on July 24, 1930 in New York City to Marjorie Hayes Carrington and Walter R. Carrington. His mother was born in the early 1900s in Sumter, South Carolina, and moved with her mother, a domestic worker, to Boston, Massachusetts in the 1920s. Carrington's father was born in Barbados, and migrated with his family to British Guiana, and then to Brooklyn, New York. Carrington also had paternal relatives from Nigeria, whom he sometimes visited in New York when he was young. After Carrington's parents divorced, his father relocated to the West Coast, where he became a civil rights activist. He helped integrate Oregon's Kaiser Shipyards, and testified before President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Fair Employment Practices Committee in Washington, D.C. Carrington grew up in his maternal grandmother's home in the diverse, working class community of Everett, Massachusetts. During this time, his mother remarried, and lived and worked in Boston, Massachusetts.

African American politicians--Interviews.

Ambassadors--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Walter C. Carrington, Section A2007_069_001_002, TRT: 0:30:13 ?

The Honorable Walter C. Carrington grew up in Everett, Massachusetts, where he lived with his sister, Marilyn Carrington, and maternal grandmother. He began his education at Everett's Hancock School, where he was an introverted student. He completed the fifth and sixth grades at the Hale School, and then attended the Albert N. Parlin School. Carrington stuttered as a child, but came to excel at public speaking as a student at Everett High School, where he served as the class vice president for four years. Throughout his childhood, Carrington listened to radio disc jockeys such as Symphony Sid; read African American periodicals like the Pittsburgh Courier and the Boston Chronicle; and developed an interest in American history and politics. Inspired by Paul Robeson, whose oratory he admired, Carrington planned to attend Rutgers University in New Jersey. However, after meeting a representative of Harvard University, Carrington decided to apply there as well, and was admitted.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Walter C. Carrington, Section A2007_069_001_003, TRT: 0:30:34 ?

The Honorable Walter C. Carrington grew up in Everett, Massachusetts in the 1940s, which he describes as a time of heightened anti-Semitism, relative to discrimination against African Americans. In 1948, Carrington matriculated at Harvard University. He majored in American history, and studied constitutional law under U.S. Ambassador Clarence Clyde Ferguson, Jr. As co-founder of the college's NAACP chapter, Carrington advocated to increase African American enrollment, and fully integrate the dormitories. In 1951, he was chosen as the youth orator of the NAACP national convention in Atlanta, Georgia, and spoke alongside Thurgood Marshall. After graduation, Carrington represented the NAACP Youth Council at conferences worldwide, including in Senegal in 1952, and Singapore in 1954. Carrington received his J.D. degree from Harvard Law School in 1955. He aspired to become a civil rights attorney; but, upon graduating, was immediately drafted to the U.S. Army, and served as a defense

counselor in Germany.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Walter C. Carrington, Section
A2007_069_001_004, TRT: 0:30:21 ?

The Honorable Walter C. Carrington was the founding president of Harvard University's NAACP chapter, and worked to increase black enrollment. He also joined Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, where he initiated the pledge class that included Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Upon graduating in 1952, Carrington enrolled at Harvard Law School, and studied under property law professors W. Barton Leach and A. James Casner. While he aspired to a constitutional law career with the NAACP, Carrington was drafted to the U.S. Army upon graduation in 1955. He served as defense counsel for two years in Germany, where he became close friends with actor Moses Gunn, who was in his unit. Upon Carrington's return to the United States, Governor Foster Furcolo appointed him to the three-person Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, which enforced the state's civil rights laws. Carrington also saw a concert by Nina Simone, whom he recommended to record executive and fellow Harvard University alumnus Tom Wilson.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Walter C. Carrington, Section
A2007_069_001_005, TRT: 0:30:42 ?

The Honorable Walter C. Carrington was appointed by Governor Foster Furcolo to the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination. As commissioner, he led an investigation of the Boston Red Sox when the team refused to integrate. With Carrington's help, Pumpsie Green became the team's first African American player in 1959. During this time, Carrington also founded the law firm of Maples, Carrington and Rhuland in Boston, and was active in state politics. While organizing for John Fitzgerald Kennedy's presidential campaign, Carrington met Kennedy's brother-in-law, R. Sargent Shriver, who recruited him as a Peace Corps director. In the 1960s, he served as an overseas director in Sierra Leone, Tunisia and Senegal. In this position, he worked directly with African governments, many of which had recently become independent, to assist in their development efforts. He was also the on-duty officer when returned volunteers occupied the Peace Corps building in Washington, D.C. to protest the Vietnam War in 1970.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Walter C. Carrington, Section
A2007_069_001_006, TRT: 0:30:11 ?

The Honorable Walter C. Carrington debated Malcolm X at the Harvard Law School Forum in 1959, while Carrington was serving on the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination. At the debate, Carrington argued that the Nation of Islam's conservatism subverted its goal of dismantling white supremacy. During the 1960s, Carrington helped lead the Peace Corps, and directed its Africa program for two years. Following disagreements with Republican appointees to the Peace Corps, he began a ten-year career at The African-American Institute, founded by William Leo Hansberry in New York City. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter appointed Carrington as the U.S. ambassador to Senegal, although President Ronald Reagan's administration removed Carrington from the position in 1981. Then, after developing Howard University's international program, Carrington served as a visiting professor at schools like Marquette University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and on the boards of the TransAfrica Forum and Africare.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Walter C. Carrington, Section
A2007_069_001_007, TRT: 0:31:10 ?

The Honorable Walter C. Carrington traveled frequently to Africa in the 1980s

while employed by The African-American Institute, a nonprofit educational organization based in New York City. After working for the Joint Center on Political and Economic Studies in Washington, D.C. for a time, Carrington became the chief of staff for Congressman Mervyn M. Dymally, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa. Then, during President Bill Clinton's transition in 1992, Carrington and Richard M. Moose wrote a proposal for United States diplomacy with Somalia. While the administration did not heed their humanitarian recommendations, the White House appointed Carrington as the U.S. ambassador to Nigeria, just as military leader Sani Abacha seized power. Carrington opposed Abacha, who was accused of human rights abuses, and instead favored newspaper publisher Moshood Abiola, then a political prisoner. Carrington talks about Abacha's apologists, and also recalls Senator Carol Moseley Braun's unannounced trip to Nigeria.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Walter C. Carrington, Section A2007_069_001_008, TRT: 0:31:10 ?

The Honorable Walter C. Carrington was the U.S. ambassador to Nigeria from 1993, the year that Sani Abacha seized power. While Abacha was supported by Minister Louis Farrakhan and Congressional Black Caucus members like Carol Moseley Braun and William Jefferson, Carrington and others like Congressman Donald M. Payne opposed Abacha's presidency in favor of Moshood Abiola, whom Carrington and Reverend Jesse L. Jackson visited in prison. In honor of Carrington's opposition to Abacha, the diplomatic enclave in Lagos, Nigeria was later named Walter Carrington Crescent. While in Nigeria, Carrington also met his wife, Dr. Arese Carrington. After his ambassadorship ended in 1997, Carrington became a fellow at Harvard University's Du Bois Institute for Afro-American Research. In 2005, he began a three-year professorship at Simmons College in Boston, Massachusetts, where he taught courses on policy and religion in Africa. Carrington reflects upon his life, and his hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Walter C. Carrington, Section A2007_069_001_009, TRT: 0:27:05 ?

The Honorable Walter C. Carrington met singer Nina Simone for the second time during his tenure as the U.S. ambassador to Nigeria. After helping Simone locate her passport, which the Nigerian government had confiscated upon her arrival, Carrington invited her to sing at a small reception hosted by the American embassy. He also extended an invitation to his future wife, Dr. Arese Carrington. Carrington talks about the Ransome-Kuti brothers, including musician Fela Kuti and physicians Beko Ransome-Kuti and Olikoye Ransome-Kuti; and the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa, the leader of Nigeria's Ogoni people. Carrington describes how he would like to be remembered, and then concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.