



Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Larkin Arnold

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Larkin Arnold
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Larkin Arnold,
Dates:	July 10, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	7 Betacam SP videocassettes (3:13:40).
Abstract:	Entertainment lawyer, music executive, and talent management chief executive Larkin Arnold (1942 -) started his own legal and management firm called Arnold & Associates. He is also a former senior vice president for Arista Records and CBS/Sony Music, where he marketed and promoted Michael Jackson's "Thriller" album. Arnold was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 10, 2007, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_202
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Entertainment lawyer, music executive and talent management chief executive Larkin Arnold, Jr. was born on September 3, 1942, in Kansas City, Missouri to Larkin and Annie Arnold. When Arnold was in elementary school, the family moved to Phoenix, Arizona, for his mother's health. In Kansas City and Phoenix, Arnold attended Catholic schools. He received his B.S. degree in political science from American University in Washington, D.C. in 1966, and graduated from Howard University Law School in 1969.

In 1970, Arnold became one of the first African Americans to be hired as an attorney by a major record label when he joined Capital Records. Four years later, he was promoted to vice president of Capitol Records, creating and heading the company's Black Music Division. In 1975, Arnold signed Natalie Cole to Capitol Records and, in 1977, he served as the executive producer for Caldera's record "Sky Island." That same year, he signed Maze featuring Frankie Beverly, the former backup band for Marvin Gaye. In 1978, Arnold left Capitol Records for Arista Records. As senior vice president, Arnold ran the West Coast office and was in charge of bringing in new artists and products. Arnold held this position until he was hired in 1980 by CBS/SONY Music as senior vice president. There, he spearheaded the marketing and promotion of Michael Jackson's "Thriller" album that sold over twenty-five million units worldwide. Arnold also represented Teena Marie, Luther Vandross, Surface, Peabo Bryson and The Reflections. In 1988, Arnold founded Arnold & Associates, one of the few wholly integrated legal and management teams in the record industry.

Arnold co-founded the Black Entertainment and Sports Lawyers Association, serving as its chairman for eight years. He has served on the boards of the Los Angeles Board of Governors of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, the Executive Committee of XI Boule Fraternity, the United Negro College Fund

Ladders of Hope Program, and the Los Angeles Zoo Commission. Arnold has received numerous honors and awards including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Executive of the Year Award, Outstanding Graduate Award of Howard University School of Law, the Distinguished Graduate Award of Howard University, the Congressional Black Caucus Outstanding Citizen Award, the Langston Bar Association Lawyer of the Year Award, the NATRA Award for Record Executive of the Year, Pollstar Award for R&B Manager of the Year, the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Award for Outstanding Community Leadership and a 100 Black Men Honor.

Arnold is married to Cynthia Arnold and is the father of two children.

Larkin Arnold was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on July 10, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Larkin Arnold was conducted by Jacques Lesure on July 10, 2007, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 7 Betacam SP videocassettes. Entertainment lawyer, music executive, and talent management chief executive Larkin Arnold (1942 -) started his own legal and management firm called Arnold & Associates. He is also a former senior vice president for Arista Records and CBS/Sony Music, where he marketed and promoted Michael Jackson's "Thriller" album.

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:

Arnold, Larkin

Lesure, Jacques (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews.
Arnold, Larkin--Interviews.

African American sound recording executives and producers--Interviews.

African American lawyers--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Arnold & Associates

HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers

MusicMakers

BusinessMakers

EntertainmentMakers

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 Larkin Arnold, July 10, 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 8/8/2011 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

Series I: Original Interview Footage, July 10, 2007

Video Oral History Interview with Larkin Arnold, Section A2007_202_001_001, TRT: 0:28:10
2007/07/10

Larkin Arnold reflects on his childhood in Kansas City, Missouri and Phoenix, Arizona. He was very conscious of the ill health of his mother, Annie Arnold, who suffered from a heart condition that would eventually kill her. The Arnolds were a close-knit family, and their family activities included riding, playing board games, and listening to radio programs. His mother's health care and medications caused a financial strain on the family. The family moved to Phoenix for his mother's health when he was in the sixth grade. Since the Arnolds were Catholic, he attended Catholic schools instead of the segregated schools in both Kansas City and Phoenix. Although he does not recall any racial incidences occurring at school, he was quite competitive, constantly trying to prove to the white students that he was their equal. Arnold talks about his boyhood experiences camping in the mountains and being involved in the Boy Scouts.

African American families--Missouri--Kansas City.

African American families--Arizona--Phoenix.

African American Catholics.

Catholic schools--Arizona--Phoenix.

Catholic schools--Missouri--Kansas City.

School integration--United States.

Boy Scouts of America.

Video Oral History Interview with Larkin Arnold, Section A2007_202_001_002, TRT: 0:29:40
2007/07/10

Arnold discusses his upbringing in a devout Catholic family. He talks about influential teachers and classmates at St. Mary's School in Phoenix, Arizona. Arnold planned to be an electrical engineer, taking advanced placement math and science courses. When he was fifteen, he began working at the elite Arizona Club to help support his family. Drs. Percy and Anna Julian, friends of his maternal aunt Emily Williams, helped him get a scholarship to Howard University. Arnold recalls his college experiences and his exposure to African American intellectuals. He talks about student activism in the Nonviolent Action Group (NAG). Arnold reflects on his conversations with Stokely Carmichael, his floormate, about socio-economic differences within races. He shares recollections about other classmates, including H. Patrick Swygert, Dennis Hightower, Togo West, Shirley Franklin and Sharon Pratt. Arnold discusses losing his scholarship after his sophomore year and leaving Howard

to earn money in Atlantic City, New Jersey.
African American Catholics--Arizona--Phoenix.
Howard University.
Carmichael, Stokely.
Swygert, H. Patrick.
Hightower, Dennis (Dennis Fowler), 1941-
West, Togo D., 1942-
Franklin, Shirley, 1945-
Kelly, Sharon Pratt, 1944-
African American student movements--Washington (D.C.).
African Americans--Study and teaching (Higher).

Video Oral History Interview with Larkin Arnold, Section A2007_202_001_003, TRT: 0:28:40
2007/07/10

Larkin Arnold talks about working to pay for his college education after he lost his scholarship at Howard University. He worked as a busboy and bellhop in Atlantic City, New Jersey, before landing a job in Washington, D.C., working for U.S. Senator Stuart Symington of Missouri. Arnold worked for Senator Symington from 1962 to 1969 during such events as the Cuban Missile Crisis, President Kennedy's assassination and the March on Washington. Arnold describes the lasting impact of being exposed to such intelligent political minds. Arnold reflects on working with Marion Barry and Stokely Carmichael in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Arnold discusses finishing his undergraduate education at American University as a political science major and receiving a scholarship to Howard Law School, where he met and married his first wife, Adrienne Smith. He discusses the impact of his mother's death in 1962.

African Americans--Employment--Washington (D.C.).
Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (U.S.).
Carmichael, Stokely.
Barry, Marion, 1936-
Howard University.
American University (Washington, D.C.).
Social conditions--United States.
African Americans--Study and teaching.
African American parents--Death.

Video Oral History Interview with Larkin Arnold, Section A2007_202_001_004, TRT: 0:28:50
2007/07/10

Larkin Arnold discusses his professors and experiences at Howard University Law School. During his final year, while doing legal work for a friend who owned a disco, Arnold realized that he wanted to practice entertainment law. He and his friend booked acts, including the Marvelettes, Jerry Butler and Patti LaBelle and the Bluebelles. Arnold describes how he got his first job by calling the office of Stanley Gortikov, chairman of Capitol Record, and arranging a meeting with him. Arnold discusses his work at Capitol Records. He then talks about his efforts to reform the legal profession in order to improve the legal representation of African American musical artists. He met with other black entertainment lawyers including David Franklin, Joe Porter, and Louise West, and gave the first entertainment law seminar at the National Bar Association. From this seminar, Arnold co-founded the Black Entertainment and Sports

Lawyers Association in 1980.
Howard University. School of Law.
African Americans--Study and teaching (Higher).
African American lawyers.
Sound recording industry.
Sound recording industry--Law and legislation.
National Bar Association.

Video Oral History Interview with Larkin Arnold, Section A2007_202_001_005, TRT: 0:30:50
2007/07/10

Larkin Arnold describes how he became vice president of Capitol Records in 1974, despite Motown Records' attempts to recruit him. The president of Capitol convinced him to stay by asking him to lead a project to determine why Capitol was unsuccessful in producing R&B music. After presenting his findings, Arnold was asked to head Capitol's R&B division. Arnold talks about signing artists such as Tavares, Peabo Bryson and Natalie Cole. Arnold transformed the division from one that was losing money to one that was earning a yearly profit of \$25 million. Arnold's demanding job put a strain on his marriage to Adrienne Smith, leading to divorce. In 1978, Clive Davis, founder of the newly created Arista Records, recruited Arnold as senior vice president. Arnold helped record sales by establishing good relationships with prominent disc jockeys. At Arista, Arnold signed artists such as GQ and Dionne Warwick before leaving in 1980.

Sound recording industry.
African Americans--Marriage.
Capitol Records, Inc.
Arista (Firm).
African American recording executives and producers.
Tavares (Musical group).
Bryson, Peabo.
Cole, Natalie, 1950-.
Davis, Clive.
GQ (Musical group).
Warwick, Dionne.

Video Oral History Interview with Larkin Arnold, Section A2007_202_001_006, TRT: 0:30:10
2007/07/10

Larkin Arnold talks about joining Sony Records in 1980 as senior vice president. At Sony, Arnold ran the Epic and Columbia labels, managing Michael Jackson and signing Luther Vandross in 1981. Jackson's "Off the Wall" album was released shortly before Arnold joined Sony, and Arnold felt that it was not marketed to its full potential. He discusses the racism he experienced at Sony when trying to make his voice heard. Arnold talks about his efforts to sign Marvin Gaye to Columbia, traveling to Belgium to meet with and persuade Gaye. Arnold shares details about his role as executive in charge of the releases of Michael Jackson's "Thriller" album and Marvin Gaye's "Midnight Love." Arnold talks about leaving Sony in 1988 to start his own entertainment law firm. He reflects on the changes in the music industry over the course of his career.
Sound recording industry.

Music trade.

African American sound recording executives and producers.

African American lawyers.

Sony Music Entertainment, Inc.

Epic Music Video (Firm).

Columbia Records, Inc.

Jackson, Michael, 1958-2009.

Jackson, Michael, 1958-2009. Thriller (Album).

Jackson, Michael, 1958-2009. Off the Wall (Album).

Vandross, Luther.

Gaye, Marvin.

Gaye, Marvin. Midnight Love (Album).

Video Oral History Interview with Larkin Arnold, Section A2007_202_001_007, TRT: 0:17:20
2007/07/10

Larkin Arnold discusses his involvement with the Black Entertainment and Sports Lawyers Association, which he co-founded in 1980 and chaired for eight years. Arnold talks about the consulting work that he has recently undertaken and shares his aspirations for the African American community. He is proud of the number of African American executives in the music industry. Young executives will achieve, Arnold hopes, the right balance between personal life and pursuing a corporate career. Arnold would like to be remembered as someone who tried to do his best and who was a responsible role model for those working in the corporate world.

Sound recording industry--Vocational guidance.

African American professional associations--Law and legislation.