

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Michael Jack

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Jack, Michael, 1951-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Michael Jack,
Dates:	September 28, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:29:10).
Abstract:	Television station general manager Michael Jack (1951 -) was the president and general manager of NBC New York. Jack was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 28, 2007, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_277
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Television manager Michael Jack was born on June 6, 1951 in Berlin, Germany to Johanna Magrete Kresse and Huston Jack, Jr., a military veteran. He moved to Massachusetts at age two, however, he relocated frequently with his father to several military bases in the United States and Germany. Jack attended John F. Kennedy High School in Willingboro, New Jersey and Heidelberg High School in Heidelberg, Germany. After graduation, Jack enrolled in Pennsylvania's Haverford College where he earned his B.A. degree in political science.

After graduating from college, Jack worked for WABC-TV in New York, a subsidiary of Capital Cities ABC-TV, where he would serve for nineteen years.

Jack moved to Chicago, Illinois in 1980, serving as an account executive for ABC sales spots in the city until 1981, when he became a national sales manager at KGO-TV in San Francisco, California. He was promoted to local sales manager at KGO and remained at the station until 1986.

In 1986, Jack moved to Los Angeles becoming Capital Cities' National Sales Office Sales Manager, where he would work for a decade. In 1996, Jack joined NBC, working for Los Angeles' KNBC as Vice President of Sales. In his role, Jack oversaw the entire department on both local and national levels. Three years later, Jack became president and general manager of Columbus, Ohio's NBC affiliate, WCMH-TV station, succeeding executive Bill Katsafanas in managing the entire station. During Jack's tenure, WCMH led the market in early morning news, late news and prime time markets.

An industry veteran, Jack became president and general manager of WRC-TV in Washington, D.C., jumping from the thirty-fourth largest television market in the nation to the eighth-largest. The same year, Jack was named NBC's Vice President of Diversity by General Electric Company's chairman and chief executive officer, Bob Wright. He became the President and General Manger of NBC New York in 2010. Jack serves on a variety of boards, including the Greater Washington Urban League, the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Washington and the Greater Washington Board of Trade.

Michael Jack resides in New York with his wife, Mary, and daughter, Truce.

Michael Jack was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on September 28, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Michael Jack was conducted by Larry Crowe on September 28, 2007, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Television station general manager Michael Jack (1951 -) was the president and general manager of NBC New York.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The

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:

Jack, Michael, 1951-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Jack, Michael, 1951---Interviews

African American businesspeople--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Television Station General Manager

HistoryMakers® Category:

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

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Michael Jack, September 28, 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 2/5/2020 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 Michael Jack, Section
A2007_277_001_001, TRT: 0:29:18 2007/09/28

Michael Jack was born on June 6, 1951 in Berlin, Germany to Johanna Kresse Jack and Huston Jack, Jr. Jack's mother was a white German woman born around 1930 in Berlin. During World War II, Jack's maternal grandfather died after being arrested by the Nazis. Jack's paternal grandfather, Jack Huston, Sr., was a miner in Bessemer, Alabama, and died when Jack's father was young. After his death, Jack's maternal grandmother, Fannette Rucker, moved the family to New York City's Harlem neighborhood, and married James Rucker. Jack's father enlisted in the U.S. Army shortly after World War II. While he was stationed in East Berlin, he met and married Jack's mother, despite the objections of his superior officers. During Jack's childhood, his father continued to serve in the U.S. military, and he frequently moved between military bases in Germany and the United States with his family. After twenty years of service, his father retired from the U.S. Army as a master sergeant, and became a high school educator.

African American families--Germany--Berlin.

African American families--Massachusetts.

African American fathers.

African American educators.

African American military officers.

African American children--Germany--Berlin.

African American neighborhoods--Missouri--Kansas City-

-History--20th century.

African American athletes.

African American children--Social life and customs.

Video Oral History Interview with Michael Jack, Section
A2007_277_001_002, TRT: 0:29:18 2007/09/28

Michael Jack grew up on U.S. military bases in the United States and Germany with his parents and younger brother, Clifford Jack. During this time, Jack was educated at the schools located on base. As American television programming was unavailable in Germany, Jack spent most of his time playing sports, and excelled in basketball and football. During his freshman year of high school, Jack attended Heidelberg American High School in Heidelberg, Germany. His father then retired from the U.S. Army, and Jack moved with his family to Willingboro, New Jersey, where he enrolled at John F. Kennedy High School. Despite his German ancestry, he identified as African American, and became involved in the Civil Rights Movement. After graduation, Jack matriculated at Haverford College, a majority-white liberal arts school in Haverford, Pennsylvania, where he received a full academic scholarship. He studied political science, and participated in an exchange program at Bryn Mawr College, a nearby women's school.

African Americans--Education (Higher)--Pennsylvania--Haverford.

African American neighborhoods--New Jersey--Willingboro--History--20th century.

African Americans--Education (Secondary)--New Jersey--Willingboro.

Haverford College.

Race identity.

African American athletes.

African American fathers.

African American students.

Video Oral History Interview with Michael Jack, Section
A2007_277_001_003, TRT: 0:30:41 2007/09/28

Michael Jack attended Haverford College in Haverford,

Pennsylvania. He was one of the few African American students on campus, and belonged to the Black Student League. During his freshman year, he played on the school's basketball team, where he clashed with the coach. He eventually quit the team alongside several of his African American teammates. During his junior and senior years, he participated in an exchange program at Bryn Mawr College, a women's school in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. Jack graduated with a degree in political science in 1973, and then moved to New York City to study fashion marketing at the Tobe Coburn School for Fashion Careers. He began an internship at Bloomingdale's department store as part of the program; and, after one year, decided to accept a full time position as an assistant buyer. In 1977, Jack was one of two African American employees to join the sales training program at WABC-TV in New York City, where he experienced discrimination from both his colleagues and superiors.

Haverford College.

Bryn Mawr College.

African American college students.

African American neighborhoods--Pennsylvania--Bryn Mawr.

African American neighborhoods--Pennsylvania--Haverford.

African American students.

African Americans--Education (Higher)--Pennsylvania--Haverford.

African Americans--Education (Higher)--Pennsylvania--Bryn Mawr.

African American neighborhoods--New York (State)--New York.

WABC-TV (Television station : New York, N.Y.).

ABC Entertainment.

African American businesspeople.

Michael Jack worked as an advertising sales representative at New York City's WABC-TV station. In this role, he sold airtime to advertisers; and, as one of the few African Americans in the industry, often experienced racial discrimination from his superiors. In 1980, Jack received the first of many promotions in the sales division of ABC. He moved to an ABC sales firm in Chicago, Illinois, and then to KGO-TV in San Francisco, California, where he worked as both the local and national sales manager. In 1986, Jack moved to Los Angeles, California to become the head of ABC's national sales office. During this time, he met his wife, Mary Jack, with whom he had one daughter, Truce Jack. After ten years without a promotion, Jack left ABC to become the vice president of sales for KNBC-TV, an NBC affiliated station in Los Angeles. He then became the president and general manager of WCMH-TV in Columbus, Ohio. Jack also talks about his sales philosophy, and the growth of niche cable networks.

African American businesspeople.

African American business enterprises--California--History.

African American business enterprises--Illinois--History.
ABC Entertainment.

African Americans--California--Los Angeles--Social life and customs.

African Americans--Ohio--Columbus--Social life and customs.

African Americans--California--San Francisco--Social life and customs.

African American families--Ohio--Columbus.

NBC News. Public Affairs Dept.

Interpersonal relations.

African Americans in mass media industry.

African Americans in television broadcasting.

Video Oral History Interview with Michael Jack, Section
A2007_277_001_005, TRT: 0:30:23 2007/09/28

Michael Jack left WCMH-TV in Columbus, Ohio to become the general manager of WRC-TV in Washington,

D.C. At the station, which was one of NBC's largest affiliate stations and its main news bureau, Jack was responsible for the production of programs like 'Reporter's Notebook' and 'Meet the Press,' in addition to local news coverage. Upon joining WRC-TV, Jack also became NBC's vice president of diversity. Throughout his career, he was one of the few African American managers in the television broadcast industry. He was also involved in civic organizations such as the 100 Black Men of America, Inc., the Greater Washington Urban League and the District of Columbia Chamber of Commerce. Jack reflects upon his life and legacy, as well as his career and plans for the future. He also shares his hopes and concerns for the African American community. Jack concludes the interview by describing how he would like to be remembered.

African American families--Washington (D.C.)--Social conditions.

African American neighborhoods--Washington (D.C.).

African Americans in television broadcasting.

WRC-TV (Television station : Washington, D.C.).

Voluntarism--United States--Management.

Racism--United States--History.

African American business enterprises--Washington (D.C.)--History.