

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Demetrius Carney

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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>	Carney, Demetrius, 1947-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Demetrius Carney,
<b>Dates:</b>	April 17, 2012 and February 5, 2008
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2008 and 2012
<b>Physical Description:</b>	9 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (4:12:42).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Corporate lawyer Demetrius Carney (1947 - ) was a Commissioner and Planning Commissioner for the City of Chicago, who worked for several law firms including the Seattle based-firm, Perkins Coie, where he specialized in the areas of government relations and lobbying issues. Carney was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 17, 2012 and February 5, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2008_009
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Corporate lawyer and Chicago police board president Demetrius Edward Carney was born on April 29, 1947 in Chicago, Illinois to James and Jessie Carney. Carney attended Chicago's Holy Angels Catholic School and Joachim Junior High School. He went on to graduate in 1969 from De La Salle High School. Afterwards, Carney attended Loyola University where he initially pursued a degree in mathematics, but decided to change his major to psychology.

Carney graduated from Loyola University in 1972 and went on to work as a teacher at Chicago's St. Ignatius College Preparatory High School. While working as a teacher, Carney was encouraged by a colleague to pursue a law degree. He then enrolled at DePaul University and graduated with his J.D. degree in 1974.

Also in 1974, Carney joined the law firm of Butler, Todd & Tucker. He left the firm in 1977 and partnered with Jerome Butler and formed the private practice of Butler & Carney. Then in 1978, he was hired by Lafontant, Wilkins & Butler and represented several organizations including Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Carney went on to form Carney & Brothers in 1985. He worked there until 1995 when he began working at the law firm of Wildman, Harold, Allen & Dixon, focusing his practice in the areas of real estate development. In 2003, Carney joined the Seattle based-firm, Perkins Coie, where he began specializing in the areas of government relations and lobbying issues.

Carney became the chairman of the Chicago police board. His other affiliations include the Cook County Bar Association, the American Bar Association and the National Bar Association. He serves on the board of trustees at St. Ignatius College Preparatory High School and on the board of directors at the Chicago Culture Center Foundation. Carney is a former commissioner and planning commissioner for the City of Chicago.

Carney lives in Chicago, Illinois.

Carney was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 5, 2008.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Demetrius Carney was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on April 17, 2012 and February 5, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 9 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. Corporate lawyer Demetrius Carney (1947 - ) was a Commissioner and Planning Commissioner for the City of Chicago, who worked for several law firms including the Seattle based-firm, Perkins Coie, where he specialized in the areas of government relations and lobbying issues.

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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:**

Carney, Demetrius, 1947-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews

Carney, Demetrius, 1947---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:**

Corporate Lawyer

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

LawMakers

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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 Demetrius Carney, April 17, 2012 and February 5, 2008. 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).

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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 Demetrius Carney, Section  
A2008\_009\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:50 2008/02/05

Demetrius Carney was born on April 29, 1947 in Chicago, Illinois to Jessie Cane Carney and James Carney. His maternal grandparents, schoolteacher Emma Cane and factory worker Wesley Cane, migrated from Mississippi to Chicago's South Side, where they raised six daughters. After the death of Carney's paternal grandmother, Cosie Carney, his paternal grandfather, auto industry union steward William Carney, married Elizabeth Carney, with whom he raised six children in a building she owned on Chicago's Drexel Avenue. Carney's father worked at the Ford Motor Company, and made jewelry to sell at art fairs. In Chicago, Carney's parents met at a dance, married and had two children. Carney grew up in his paternal grandparents' building on Drexel Avenue, where he learned to speak Japanese from his paternal aunt, Yasako Carney. He excelled as a student at the nearby Holy Angels Catholic School. Carney also describes his younger brother, tax lawyer Victor Carney, and outings to Riverview Park.

Video Oral History Interview with Demetrius Carney, Section  
A2008\_009\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:30 2008/02/05

Demetrius Carney grew up on Drexel Avenue in an African American community on Chicago's South Side. His parents were active at the Oakwood Community Center, through which Carney attended an all-black summer camp in Janesville, Wisconsin. He studied at the Holy Angels Catholic School, where he was required to attend Mass with his parents each Sunday. He was influenced by his teachers, Sister Gregoria and Sister

Danielle Marie, who were African American. Carney had difficulty with athletics due to his foot disability, but excelled in math and reading. In 1957, his parents purchased a home at 88th Street and South Parkway, in a majority white Irish neighborhood. They were the second black family to live in the area, and required police protection while moving into their house. From the seventh grade, Carney attended the St. Joachim School; where, as the only black student, he was ostracized by his classmates.

Video Oral History Interview with Demetrius Carney, Section A2008\_009\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:30 2008/02/05

Demetrius Carney attended the mostly white St. Joachim's School on Chicago's South Side, where his peers eventually included photographer Jeanne Moutoussamay-Ashe. He befriended students at the all-black Burnside Elementary School, and attended functions hosted by Jack and Jill of America, Inc. In school, he excelled academically, despite the discrimination of his white classmates, who called him racial slurs and physically attacked him after class. He graduated, and was admitted to the integrated and culturally diverse De La Salle Institute in Chicago, where he and his black peers were told not to pursue a college degree. During high school, he worked full time at a Jewel-Osco grocery store. Upon graduating, Carney enrolled at Loyola University Chicago, where he was elected president of the Gonzaga Hall dormitory, and became active in the Black Power movement on campus. After earning a degree in psychology, he obtained a teaching position at the St. Ignatius College Prep high school.

Video Oral History Interview with Demetrius Carney, Section A2008\_009\_001\_004, TRT: 0:31:15 2008/02/05

Demetrius Carney taught U.S. history at the St. Ignatius College Prep high school in Chicago, where he mentored his African American pupils, and served as moderator of the Black Organization of Students. Carney's colleague, Bruce Callow, convinced him to pursue a career in law. In 1970, he enrolled in evening courses at the DePaul University College of Law, where he became active in the Black American Law Students Association, and

befriended Ann Claire Williams, who later served as an appellate judge. Carney obtained his first legal position at the Chicago Title Insurance Company, where he was mentored by attorney Earl Neal. In 1975, Carney joined the law firm of Tucker, Watson, Butler and Todd, where he met such lawyers as R. Eugene Pincham, James D. Montgomery and William Robert Ming, Jr. In 1977, Carney founded the Butler and Carney real estate law firm with Jerome Butler. Soon, they were recruited to join the firm of Jewel Lafontant-MANKarious and Julian Wilkins.

Video Oral History Interview with Demetrius Carney, Section  
A2008\_009\_001\_005, TRT: 0:31:10 2008/02/05

Demetrius Carney was a real estate lawyer at the law firm of Lafontant, Wilkins and Butler. In 1980, he collaborated with Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority president Barbara Kinard Phillips to secure a new headquarters for the organization in Chicago, Illinois. In 1983, Carney founded the Carney and Brothers firm with Jerome Butler and Butler's brother-in-law, Alan W. Brothers. Their practice focused on real estate negotiations for clients like Seaway Bank and Trust Company, and warranty work for the General Motors Corporation. Carney belonged to the America Bar Association (ABA), where he met lawyers of color like Fletcher "Flash" Wiley, with whom he formed the American Lawyers Consortium, Inc. In 1985, Carney was selected by the ABA's Minorities in the Profession Committee to be referred business with clients like the Ford Motor Company. After Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley's election in 1989, Carney focused on public finance work, and was mentored by lawyers Roxanne Ward and Corliss Stone-Littles.

Video Oral History Interview with Demetrius Carney, Section  
A2008\_009\_001\_006, TRT: 0:30:10 2008/02/05

Demetrius Carney was a partner at the Carney and Brothers law firm when he began to notice grey spots in his vision. He visited his friend, Dr. Maurice F. Rabb, who discovered a tumor on his optic nerve. At Rush University Hospital, neurosurgeon Charles Michael D'Angelo operated to remove it. During Carney's recovery, he contracted bacterial meningitis, and was rushed to the hospital by his friends, business executive Peter Bynoe

and journalist Grayson Mitchell. Per his doctor's advice, Carney dissolved the Carney and Brothers law firm. In 1997, he became the only black partner at the majority white, corporate firm of Wildman, Harrold, Allen and Dixon LLP. As head of the government affairs practice group, he recruited black lawyers, and obtained clients through a network of black businesspeople, including telecommunications attorney Dana D. Rice and healthcare executive Joyce Washington. Five years after his surgery, Carney's brain tumor returned, and he had another operation to remove it.

Video Oral History Interview with Demetrius Carney, Section  
A2008\_009\_001\_007, TRT: 0:14:45 2008/02/05

Demetrius Carney was appointed to his first civic position by Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley in 1989. He served on the City of Chicago Plan Commission under Valerie Jarrett, and oversaw zoning, ordinance compliance and property plan approval. In 1995, Carney was appointed by Richard M. Daley to succeed Albert C. Maule as president of the Chicago Police Board. During his presidential tenure, LaTanya Haggerty was fatally shot by a Chicago police officer while unarmed. The board ruled to dismiss three of the four officers involved, but they faced no criminal charges. After their termination, attorneys Johnnie Cochran and James D. Montgomery settled a civil suit against the City of Chicago for \$18 million. In 2005, Carney joined the law firm of Perkins Coie LLP, where he retained clients like The Boeing Company. He focused on the public finance sector, and represented an international clientele of airport concessionaires. In this role, he promoted minority businesses in the aviation industry.

Video Oral History Interview with Demetrius Carney, Section  
A2008\_009\_002\_008, TRT: 8:31:10 2012/04/17

Demetrius Carney was appointed to a fourth term as president of the Chicago Police Board by Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel. In his role as president, he conducted the search for a new police superintendent, and selected Garry McCarthy. After the financial crash of 2008, Carney narrowed the focus of his work at the law firm of Perkins Coie LLP from the public finance sector to airport concessionaires in facilities like the Los Angeles



International Airport, as well as abroad. In the airport industry, Carney's business concentrated on news and gifts, food and beverage industries and duty free deals, and he worked internationally with import and export trade regulations through the U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Carney reflects upon his career, the changes in the practice of law and their impact on minority law firms. He also describes the opportunities available to African American lawyers at the time of the interview.

Video Oral History Interview with Demetrius Carney, Section  
A2008\_009\_002\_009, TRT: 9:22:22 2012/04/17

Demetrius Carney describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community. He talks about the legacy of the previous generation of African American lawyers, including R. Eugene Pincham and Earl Neal, as well as that of his own generation. Carney reflects upon his family, life and career, and then concludes the interview by describing his legacy and how he would like to be remembered.