

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with H. Melvin Ming

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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>	Ming, H. Melvin, 1944-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with H. Melvin Ming,
<b>Dates:</b>	February 6, 2008
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2008
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:09:42).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Media executive H. Melvin Ming (1944 - ) was the director of Westwood, Inc., the nation's largest independent producer and distributor of programming for commercial radio. He was also the president and CEO of the Sesame Workshop. Ming was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 6, 2008, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2008_013
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Corporate media executive H. Melvin Ming was born Hilton Austin Melvin Ming in Hamilton, Bermuda. He is one of three sons of Hester and Calvin Ming. After completing his early education in Bermuda, Ming moved to the United States and graduated with his B.A. degree from Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1967.

Upon graduation, Ming was hired as an Auditor and Certified Public Accountant (CPA) for the accounting firm Coopers Lybrand (PricewaterhouseCoopers) in

Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. In 1973, at the age of twenty-nine, Ming became only the seventh African American to achieve professional standing as a CPA in Pennsylvania. After a successful twelve year tenure at Coopers Lybrand, Ming left to become the Assistant Director for East of the River Health Association, a primary care Community Health Center in Southeast Washington, D.C. Ming then served for two years as Vice President, Finance and Administration, for the National Urban Coalition, an urban policy analysis research non-profit corporation. He then led a successful financial turn-around of National Public Radio (NPR) in Washington, D.C. Ming went on to lead three more major financial restructurings at Channel Thirteen/WNET in New York, WQED in Pittsburgh and the Museum of Television and Radio in New York and Los Angeles. In 1999, Ming became the Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer of Sesame Workshop in New York, the creators of the popular children's television show *Sesame Street*. In 2002, Ming became Chief Operating Officer at Sesame Workshop. In 2006, Ming became the Director of Westwood, Inc., the largest independent producer and distributor of programming for commercial radio in the nation.

Ming serves on boards including the trustee of Regional Conferences Retirement Board, where he serves as one of three outside directors overseeing the \$94 million retirement fund; First Children Finance, a non-profit organization created to meet the growing demand for quality early care and education, especially in low-income communities; and Atlantic Union College, a liberal arts college of 600 students located in South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

Ming was married in 1972 and has two children, Calvin Ming, thirty-five, and Jerilynne Ming, thirty-four. He also has two grandchildren, Carina and Cameron Ming.

Ming was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 6, 2008.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with H. Melvin Ming was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 6, 2008, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Media executive H. Melvin Ming (1944 - ) was the director of Westwood, Inc., the nation's largest independent producer and distributor of programming for commercial radio. He was also the president and CEO of the Sesame Workshop.

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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:

Ming, H. Melvin, 1944-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

## **Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## **Occupations:**

Media Executive

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

MediaMakers

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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 H. Melvin Ming, February 6, 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

## 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 H. Melvin Ming, Section  
A2008\_013\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:18 2008/02/06

H. Melvin Ming was born on August 22, 1944 in Pembroke Parish, Bermuda to Hester Bean Ming and Calvin Ming, Sr. In Bermuda, his paternal ancestors were enslaved by the Trimingham family; and, after emancipation, adopted the surname Ming as a shortened version of Trimingham. Ming's paternal grandfather worked as a painter, and at a local hospital in St. George's Parish, where Ming's father grew up. He was formally educated through the third grade, and supplemented his schooling with extensive reading. He worked in the transportation department of Bermuda's prison system, and later became a taxi driver. Ming's maternal grandmother, Helen Bean, worked as a shop clerk and in domestic service; while his maternal grandfather, Earnest Bean, worked in Bermuda's British Naval Yards. A talented musician, Ming's maternal grandfather went on to open an instrument repair business on the island. Ming's father was also interested in music, and taught Ming about both classical and contemporary genres.

Video Oral History Interview with H. Melvin Ming, Section  
A2008\_013\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:34 2008/02/06

H. Melvin Ming grew up with his parents and maternal grandparents in the Smith's Hill neighborhood of Hamilton, Bermuda. He attended The Salvation Army church, where his maternal grandfather, Earnest Bean,

initiated the family's membership and served as the church bandmaster. Many of Ming's Sunday school classmates were also his peers at the Central School, a one-room schoolhouse, where Ming was teased for wearing glasses. He was encouraged academically by his mother, Hester Bean Ming, who valued education and was the first in the family to graduate from high school. During his childhood, she worked as an office manager at a real estate company, and once called on Ming to assist her when she was sick. This was his earliest experience of handling money for a business, although he was also familiar with his maternal grandfather's instrument repair business and his father's taxi service. Many of Ming's neighbors were entrepreneurs as well, and he grew up with numerous professional role models.

Video Oral History Interview with H. Melvin Ming, Section  
A2008\_013\_001\_003, TRT: 0:31:04 2008/02/06

H. Melvin Ming's mother, Hester Bean Ming, worked in Bermuda's realty industry, and helped create the first property development with homes available to the majority of the island's residents. She valued education; and, prior to Ming's final year at Bermuda's Berkeley Institute, sent him to attend Temple University High School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He initially struggled with the rigorous coursework, but succeeded in gaining admission to Temple University, where he earned a degree in accounting in 1967. Ming joined the firm of Lybrand, Ross Brothers and Montgomery; and, one year later, was drafted into the U.S. Army. He trained at North Carolina's Fort Bragg and California's Fort Ord, before transferring to the U.S. Army Airborne School in Fort Benning, Georgia. After his discharge, Ming passed the certified public accountant (CPA) examination, and became the State of Pennsylvania's seventh black CPA. He also joined the National Association of Black Accountants.

Video Oral History Interview with H. Melvin Ming, Section  
A2008\_013\_001\_004, TRT: 0:31:03 2008/02/06

H. Melvin Ming spent his childhood summers in the countryside of Bermuda, where he befriended a girl named Diana Darrell Ming. He lost contact with her after moving

to the United States to attend Temple University; and, while visiting Bermuda several years later, reconnected with his childhood friend, whom he married in 1972. By this time, Ming was a certified public accountant at the majority-white firm of Lybrand, Ross Brothers and Montgomery; and, although he experienced racial discrimination from some of his coworkers, many colleagues helped him advance in his career. He opened the firm's Washington, D.C. office in 1977, and left the company in 1980. From that time, he worked briefly as the CFO of the East of the River Health Clinic, and then became the CFO of M. Carl Holman's National Urban Coalition. Ming talks about the qualities of a good accountant, and recalls serving as president of the local chapter of the National Association of Black Accountants in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania from 1973.

Video Oral History Interview with H. Melvin Ming, Section  
A2008\_013\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:34 2008/02/06

H. Melvin Ming served as the CFO of the National Urban Coalition, where he worked alongside Dorothy Height, Ramona Edelin and Eddie Williams, and helped navigate the federal budget cuts of the 1980s. Next, Ming became the CFO of National Public Radio (NPR), and then New York City's WNET-TV. During his ten years there, he reformed the station's budget, and helped create new programs like 'American Masters' and 'Heritage: Civilization and the Jews.' He was then recruited to join WQED Multimedia in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he managed the finances of three broadcast stations and a magazine. After two years, Ming became the CFO of the Museum of Television and Radio, which operated archives in New York City and California. Next, he was hired as the CFO of the Children's Television Workshop, which was later renamed the Sesame Workshop. The company produced the 'Sesame Street' television program, which expanded to twenty countries outside of the United States during Ming's tenure.

Video Oral History Interview with H. Melvin Ming, Section  
A2008\_013\_001\_006, TRT: 0:29:15 2008/02/06

H. Melvin Ming witnessed the power of television to influence children while raising his daughter, who aspired

to become a judge after watching the Watergate hearings. Ming was influenced by this experience while serving as the CFO of the Sesame Workshop, which produced the 'Sesame Street' television program. He supported the company's focus on early childhood education, and helped broadcast 'Sesame Street' in countries like Kuwait, Brazil and Egypt. At this point in the interview, Ming describes the international distribution of 'Sesame Street,' which involved tailoring the program to each country's educational objectives. For the South African program, the Sesame Workshop developed a character named Kami, who educated children about HIV/AIDS prevention. Ming also advocated for 'Sesame Street' programs in Brazil and Indonesia, where children were not required to attend school until the age of seven years old. He describes his plans for the future, and reflects upon his life and legacy.

Video Oral History Interview with H. Melvin Ming, Section  
A2008\_013\_001\_007, TRT: 0:07:54 2008/02/06

H. Melvin Ming describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community, and reflects upon his success at the Sesame Workshop. He also talks about his children, Calvin Ming and Jerilynne Ming; and grandchildren, Carina Ming and Cameron Ming. Ming concludes the interview by describing how he would like to be remembered.