

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Harry Johns

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Johns, Harry, 1921-2018
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Harry Johns,
Dates:	February 27, 2008
Bulk Dates:	2008
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:51:40).
Abstract:	Accountant and academic administrator Harry Johns (1921 - 2018) served in numerous positions at Central State University, including university controller, business manager, vice president of fiscal affairs, director of planning and dean of the college of business. He also founded an educational management firm called H.D. Johns Associates. Johns was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 27, 2008, in Xenia, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2008_031
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Education administrator and accountant Harry George Johns was born on December 7, 1921 in Alliance, Ohio to Iona Huskey Johns and Ewing James from Springfield, Tennessee. He attended Seneca Elementary School and graduated from Alliance High School in 1939. In 1940, Johns enrolled at Wilberforce College where he was a member of the school's ROTC program and a member of the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity. In 1943, Johns volunteered for the United States Army and completed basic training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. After receiving artillery training, Johns attended infantry school at Fort Bennie near Columbus, Georgia.

In 1944, Johns became apart of the attachment to General Patton's Third Army and helped allied forces break through German lines of defense at Saint Lo. One day, after fighting in battle, Johns and his regiment faced false accusations of rape by an elderly German woman. During his time overseas, Johns later experienced similar racist practices while majoring in accounting and business management at the Sheringham American University in Sheringham, England.

In 1946, Johns returned to the U.S. and re-enrolled at Wilberforce College. He graduated with his B.S. degree in accounting in 1947 and went on to attend Columbia University in New York City, where he graduated with his M.A. degree in 1949. That same year, Johns was hired as the assistant bursar at Central State University. In 1951, he was promoted to the position of university controller and also became a founding board member of the Central State University federal credit union. Johns was promoted to business manager of Central State University in 1955, and in 1959, he became the vice president of fiscal affairs and the director of physical and future planning. Johns later served as dean of the college of business at Central State University from 1972 until 1977.

Later, Johns founded H.D. Johns Associates and began providing educational management services. In 1970, he became a member of Xenia Rotary Club and served as the club's first black president in 1974. Johns has received

various awards and recognitions including the Central State University College of Business Administration Alumnus Award, the Xenia Area Chamber of Commerce Award and the PAL of the Year Award. Johns is also recognized through Central State University's Dr. Harry G. Johns Scholarship.

Harry Johns passed away on March 19, 2018.

Johns was interviewed by the *The History Makers* on February 27, 2008.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Harry Johns was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 27, 2008, in Xenia, Ohio, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Accountant and academic administrator Harry Johns (1921 - 2018) served in numerous positions at Central State University, including university controller, business manager, vice president of fiscal affairs, director of planning and dean of the college of business. He also founded an educational management firm called H.D. Johns Associates.

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:

Johns, Harry, 1921-2018

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Johns, Harry, 1921-2018 --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Accountant

HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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 Harry Johns, February 27, 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 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 Harry Johns, Section A2008_031_001_001, TRT: 0:27:40 ?

Harry Johns was born on December 7, 1921 in Alliance, Ohio to Iona Huskey Johns and Ewing Johns. Johns knew little of his ancestors prior to his parents, both of whom were born in the late 19th century in Springfield, Tennessee. There, his mother spent her childhood working in the tobacco fields, and obtained a third grade education. After the birth of Johns' three older siblings, his parents moved north, and settled in the steel mill town of Alliance, Ohio. The community was made up of African Americans and Southern European immigrants, and included few black professionals. His father found work at the American Steel Foundries, and was killed in an accident when Johns was nine years old. In Alliance, John's family belonged to the Triumph Church and Kingdom of God in Christ; but, as a teenager, he joined the St. Luke A.M.E. Church, where he became the assistant superintendent of the Sunday school. In this role, he was sent to attend a conference at the historically black Wilberforce University.

Video Oral History Interview with Harry Johns, Section A2008_031_001_002, TRT: 0:25:10 ?

Harry Johns' childhood home was located between the railroad tracks and the steel mills of Alliance, Ohio. There, his community included African American families as well as Southern European immigrants. Johns began his education at the South Seneca School. He enjoyed math, and once built a crystal radio set. In 1930, John's father died in a steel mill accident, and his mother struggled financially throughout the Great Depression. To help support the family, Johns earned money by raising rabbits and collecting scrap metal. When he reached the age of sixteen years old, he obtained a position at a local country club, where he began as a shoe shiner and locker attendant, and eventually became a waiter. During this time, Johns was a student at Alliance High School, where he was one of two African Americans in his graduating class. During his senior year, Johns was assigned to write a paper about his aspirations, and decided to pursue a career in education.

Video Oral History Interview with Harry Johns, Section A2008_031_001_003, TRT: 0:28:20 ?

Harry Johns belonged to the glee club and the debate team at Alliance High School in Alliance, Ohio. He was one of the few black students at the school, which had no African American faculty. Upon graduating in 1940, Johns matriculated at Wilberforce University in Wilberforce, Ohio. There, he joined the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, and worked as a waiter to pay for his education. Johns also befriended his classmates, including his roommate, All-American football player Big Jim Miller; as well as Raymond Haysbert, Sr. and George F. David, III, who later became executives of the Parks Sausage Company. At the end of his junior year in 1943, Johns was called into active duty with the U.S. Army, and was assigned to a series of specialized training programs. Years later, he returned to Wilberforce, where he was instrumental in the establishment of the university radio station. Johns also talks about the elocutionist Hallie Q. Brown, and her contribution to Wilberforce University.

Video Oral History Interview with Harry Johns, Section A2008_031_001_004, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Harry Johns joined the Reserve Officers' Training Corps at Wilberforce University, and was drafted in 1943 into the U.S. Army, where he experienced racial discrimination on numerous occasions. Johns was threatened by a white policeman while traveling to Officer Candidate School in Fort Benning, Georgia; and, upon arrival, he discovered that the officers' barracks were illegally segregated. Johns was rejected from the program shortly before graduation, along with several other black trainees. He was then sent to join the

all-black 999th Field Artillery Battalion in North Carolina, and deployed to the European front. The battalion was attached to General George S. Patton's Third Army; and, following D-Day, participated in the attack against the German forces in Saint-Lo, France. Johns' unit was engaged in combat in France and Germany, where one of his comrades was falsely accused of rape by a white woman. After the war, Johns enrolled at Shrivenham American University in England through a government program.