

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reginald Hudlin

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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>	Hudlin, Reginald
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reginald Hudlin,
<b>Dates:</b>	December 12, 2018 and March 31, 2008
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2008 and 2018
<b>Physical Description:</b>	12 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (5:46:04).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Film director, broadcast executive, and television director Reginald Hudlin (1961 - ) was the president of entertainment for Black Entertainment Television (BET) Networks. He wrote, produced, executive-produced and directed several films and televisions shows including House Party, Boomerang, The Great White Hype, Cosmic Slop, The Bernie Mac Show, Everybody Hates Chris and The Boondocks. Hudlin was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 12, 2018 and March 31, 2008, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2008_067
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Reginald Alan Hudlin was born on December 15, 1961, in Centreville, Missouri. He was raised in East St. Louis, Illinois, by his parents Warrington W. Hudlin, Sr. and Helen (Cason) Hudlin. In 1983, Hudlin received his B.A. degree from Harvard University where his senior thesis project was the first version of the film, *House Party*. Hudlin was supported as an artist-in-residence by the Illinois Arts

Council from 1984 to 1985.

At the age of seventeen, Hudlin co-founded the non-profit Black Filmmakers Foundation (BFF) with his brother, Warrington Hudlin, Jr., in 1978. The brothers then formed Hudlin Bros., Inc., a production company which made several popular music videos for MCA and Polygram Records for artists like Heavy D and the Boyz, Guy and Blue Magic. In 1990, Hudlin expanded his Harvard thesis project into the full length feature film *House Party*, starring the rap duo Kid 'N Play. Hudlin directed the hit movie *Boomerang* in 1992, starring Eddie Murphy. Later that year, Hudlin co-executive produced *Bebe's Kids*, an animated musical comedy based on the comic monologues of the late Robin Harris. In 1994, Hudlin created and directed the animated series *Cosmic Slop* which combined fantasy and social commentary. He received a Cable Ace Award for his work on *Cosmic Slop* in 1995.

The Hudlin Brothers then founded Hudlin Bros. Records in 1996 and signed a distribution deal with Epic Records, a division of Sony. Between 1996 and 2002, Hudlin directed or produced a number of films including *The Great White Hype* (1996), *Ride* (1998), *The Ladies' Man* (2000) and *Serving Sara* (2002). Starting in 2004, Hudlin began writing the story line for the Marvel Comic series *Black Panther*, the first modern Black superhero. In 2005, Hudlin co-wrote a comic novel, *Birth of a Nation*, with *The Boondocks* creator Aaron McGruder. He also serves as executive producer for the animated version of *The Boondocks* on the Cartoon Network. On July 12, 2005, Hudlin was named President of Entertainment for Black Entertainment Television (BET) Networks. At BET, Hudlin is chief programming executive in charge of the network's music, entertainment, specials, sports, news and public affairs, film and program acquisitions, home entertainment and programming development units. Hudlin married Chrisette Suter on November 30, 2002. They have a daughter, Helena Grace, and reside in Los Angeles, California.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reginald Hudlin was conducted by Harriette Cole and Julieanna L. Richardson on December 12, 2018 and March 31, 2008, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 12 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. Film director, broadcast executive, and television director Reginald Hudlin (1961 - ) was the president of entertainment for Black Entertainment Television (BET) Networks. He wrote, produced, executive-produced and directed several films and televisions shows including

House Party, Boomerang, The Great White Hype, Cosmic Slop, The Bernie Mac Show, Everybody Hates Chris and The Boondocks.

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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:

Hudlin, Reginald

Cole, Harriette (Interviewer)

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Burghlea, Neculai (Videographer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

## **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews

Hudlin, Reginald--Interviews

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African American motion picture producers and directors--Interviews

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African American television producers and directors--Interviews

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African American executives--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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Black Entertainment Television

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## **Occupations:**

Film Director

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Broadcast Executive

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Television Director

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

EntertainmentMakers

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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 Reginald Hudlin, December 12, 2018 and March 31, 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 Reginald Hudlin, Section  
A2008\_067\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:31 2008/03/31

Reginald Hudlin was born on December 15, 1961 in Centerville, Missouri to Helen Cason Hudlin and

Warrington Hudlin, Sr. Prior to emancipation, one of Hudlin's paternal ancestors bought his freedom, and migrated to St. Louis, Missouri. There, Hudlin's great-great-great-grandfather, Peter Hudlin, operated a station on the Underground Railroad; and his son, Richard Hudlin, became a journalist and filmmaker. Hudlin's paternal grandfather, Edward Hudlin, served in Europe during World War I. While overseas, he discovered the art of rubble stone masonry; and, upon his return to the United States, became a stonemason. Hudlin's maternal grandparents, Inez Kelso Cason and Richard Cason, were professionals in St. Louis. Hudlin's parents met while working for the post office; and, after marrying, moved to East St. Louis, Illinois, where they raised Hudlin and his brothers, Warrington Hudlin and Christopher Hudlin. In East St. Louis, Hudlin's mother ran a mental health center and a program for gifted individuals.

African American motion picture producers and directors--Interviews.

African American television producers and directors--Interviews.

African American executives--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Reginald Hudlin, Section A2008\_067\_001\_002, TRT: 0:31:10 2008/03/31

Reginald Hudlin grew up in East St. Louis, Illinois. He spent his childhood working at his father's company, Hudlin and Co. Insurance; and playing with his friends in the industrial areas of East St. Louis. Hudlin's community was close-knit, and included gospel singer Brother Joe May and his daughter, Annette May Thomas. Hudlin attended East St. Louis' Alta Sita Elementary School, until the school was destroyed in an explosion caused by an industrial accident. Hudlin's mother then enrolled him in a majority-white private school in Webster Groves, Missouri. Upon reaching the sixth grade, he graduated to the Assumption Catholic High School in East St. Louis. From an early age, Hudlin's interest in storytelling was influenced by the comic books of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby; and his oldest brother, Warrington Hudlin, with whom he took courses at East St. Louis' Katherine

Dunham Centers for Arts and Humanities. There, Hudlin's brother studied filmmaking under Shelby Steele.

Video Oral History Interview with Reginald Hudlin, Section  
A2008\_067\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:43 2008/03/31

Reginald Hudlin attended the Assumption Catholic High School in East St. Louis, Illinois, where he participated in Model UN and the student council. He also studied martial arts at the Katherine Dunham Centers for Arts and Humanities. While in high school, Hudlin aspired to make films, and wrote several sketches and scripts. After graduating in 1979, he matriculated to the film program at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. There, he developed his film style, which was influenced by hip hop music. Hudlin also joined his older brother's, Warrington Hudlin's organization, the Black Filmmaker Foundation, which produced a film festival in New York City. While in college, Hudlin met several future film industry professionals, including screenwriter Michael Ferris, director Jonathan Mostow and executive Debra Lee, with whom he later worked at Black Entertainment Television. Hudlin also wrote and shot the short film 'House Party,' which was later developed into his first feature film.

Video Oral History Interview with Reginald Hudlin, Section  
A2008\_067\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:17 2008/03/31

Reginald Hudlin wrote the short film 'House Party' as a capstone project for the film program at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He cast the film with local youth, and shot scenes over the course of his senior year. Like many of his future projects, 'House Party' was influenced by hip hop culture, and movies like 'Animal House' and 'Risky Business.' Upon graduating from Harvard University, Hudlin taught at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee while saving money to produce an independent film. After meeting Spike Lee at a film festival in New York City, Hudlin was recommended to A and M Films as a screenwriter for 'Janet Jackson and The Time.' Although the movie was never produced, Hudlin saved enough of his salary to produce a manuscript and storyboard for a feature length version of 'House Party,' which was purchased by New Line Cinema. The movie

starred Christopher Reid, Christopher Martin and Tisha Campbell-Martin, all of whom were beginning their entertainment careers at the time.

Video Oral History Interview with Reginald Hudlin, Section A2008\_067\_002\_005, TRT: 5:28:07 2018/12/12

Video Oral History Interview with Reginald Hudlin, Section A2008\_067\_002\_006, TRT: 6:31:24 2018/12/12

Video Oral History Interview with Reginald Hudlin, Section A2008\_067\_002\_007, TRT: 7:29:17 2018/12/12

Video Oral History Interview with Reginald Hudlin, Section A2008\_067\_002\_008, TRT: 8:30:44 2018/12/12

Video Oral History Interview with Reginald Hudlin, Section A2008\_067\_002\_009, TRT: 9:29:55 2018/12/12

Video Oral History Interview with Reginald Hudlin, Section A2008\_067\_002\_010, TRT: 10:30:09 2018/12/12

Video Oral History Interview with Reginald Hudlin, Section A2008\_067\_002\_011, TRT: 11:27:44 2018/12/12

Video Oral History Interview with Reginald Hudlin, Section A2008\_067\_002\_012, TRT: 12:16:03 2018/12/12