

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Malcolm-Jamal Warner

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Warner, Malcolm-Jamal
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Malcolm-Jamal Warner,
Dates:	April 2, 2008
Bulk Dates:	2008
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:08:14).
Abstract:	Television actor and television director Malcolm-Jamal Warner (1970 -) was best known for his role as Theodore Huxtable on "The Cosby Show," which earned him a nomination for a Primetime Emmy Award. His other television and film credits included, "The Father Clements Story," "The Tuskegee Airmen," "Drop Zone" and "Malcolm & Eddie." Warner was also a spoken word artist and musician with his group Miles Long. Warner was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 2, 2008, in Sherman Oaks, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2008_070
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Television actor and television director Malcolm-Jamal Warner was born on August 18, 1970 in Jersey City, New Jersey. Warner was raised by his mother, Pamela Warner, in California where he became interested in acting at the age of nine. He attended Angelus Mesa Elementary School in Los Angeles, California and he graduated from the Professional Children's School in New York City in

1988.

In 1982, Warner was cast as Johnny Randolph on an episode of *Matt Houston*, and in 1983 he was cast as Lucas Boyd on an episode of *Fame* entitled *Ending on a High Note*. In 1984, Warner was cast as Theodore Huxtable on *The Cosby Show*. In addition to being nominated for a prime-time Emmy Award for best supporting actor in a comedy series, Warner also won two Young Actor Awards for his role as Theodore Huxtable. He also provided the soundtrack for the 1986 season and directed five episodes of *The Cosby Show*, including the reunion show.

Throughout the 1980s, Warner appeared in several television series and television specials including an ABC afterschool special entitled *A Desperate Exit* and *The Father Clements Story*. In 1989, he authored *Theo and Me Get into The Groove*. Warner continued to work in television and film during the 1990s as a producer and director. He directed music videos for the R&B group, New Edition. During 1992, he directed a documentary entitled *The Truth About You and Me and AIDS*. The same year, Warner starred in his own sitcom entitled *Here and Now*. He appeared in the HBO films *The Tuskegee Airmen* as well as *Tyson*, and the feature film *Drop Zone* with Wesley Snipes. Warner also produced an animated educational series entitled *The Magic School Bus*. From 1996 through 2000, Warner co-starred as Malcolm McGhee on the sitcom, *Malcolm & Eddie*. He directed over a dozen episodes and served as show supervisor in 1997.

From 2002-2006 Warner was cast in various television productions including *Lyric Café*, HBO's *Def Poetry Jam*, *Jeremiah* and *Dexter*. In 2007, Warner showcased his musical and spoken word talents by releasing his debut EP *The Miles Long Mixtape*.

Malcolm-Jamal Warner was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on April 2, 2008.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Malcolm-Jamal Warner was conducted by Jacques Lesure on April 2, 2008, in Sherman Oaks, California, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Television actor and television director Malcolm-Jamal Warner (1970 -) was best known for his role as Theodore Huxtable on "The Cosby Show," which earned him a nomination for a Primetime Emmy Award. His other television and film credits included, "The Father Clements Story," "The Tuskegee Airmen," "Drop Zone" and "Malcolm & Eddie." Warner was also a spoken word artist and musician with his group Miles Long.

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:

Warner, Malcolm-Jamal

Lesure, Jacques (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Warner, Malcolm-Jamal--Interviews

African American television personalities--Interviews

African American motion picture actors and actresses--Interviews

African American television producers and directors--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Television Actor

Television Director

HistoryMakers® Category:

EntertainmentMakers

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 Malcolm-Jamal Warner, April 2, 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).

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 Malcolm-Jamal Warner, Section A2008_070_001_001, TRT: 0:29:34 2008/04/02

Malcolm-Jamal Warner was born on August 18, 1970 in Jersey City, New Jersey to Pamela Warner and Robert Warner, Jr. His maternal great-aunt, Cleo Hayes, was a Harlem dancer who later performed with the Silver Belles. Warner's maternal grandmother, Thelma Brown McGee, died when his mother was thirteen years old. His parents met as children in Chicago, Illinois, and later relocated to Jersey City. After his parents' separation, Warner and his mother moved to Los Angeles, California when he was five years old. There, they lived in the Leimert Park area with his maternal grandfather, James McGee, and Warner enrolled at Angeles Mesa Elementary School. He then moved to the Baldwin Village neighborhood of Los Angeles, where he briefly attended Hillcrest Drive Elementary School, before transferring to Coliseum Street Elementary School, where he graduated from the fifth

grade. Warner remembers visiting his paternal grandparents, Alpha Milton Warner and Robert Warner, Sr. in Chicago.

African American families--New Jersey.

African American parents--New Jersey.

Civil rights workers--United States.

Leimert Park (Los Angeles, Calif.).

African American students--Education (Elementary)--California.

Single parents--California.

Divorce.

Video Oral History Interview with Malcolm-Jamal Warner, Section A2008_070_001_002, TRT: 0:29:05 2008/04/02

Malcolm-Jamal Warner participated in a busing program, which exchanged students on an alternating schedule between Coliseum Street Elementary School and Marquez Avenue Elementary School in Los Angeles, California, where Warner encountered prejudiced white students. He began his acting career at nine years old at the Inglewood Playhouse in Inglewood, California, where he met actress Kim Fields. His first role was as the Tin Man in 'Alice Is That You?' After the performance, Warner signed with talent agent Miriam Balm. He was then cast in episodes of 'Matt Houston' and 'Fame' shortly after. Warner also attended Paul Revere Junior High School, where his mother, Pamela Warner, encouraged him to maintain his grades. After a year of unsuccessful auditions, Warner received his breakout role as Theo Huxtable in 'The Cosby Show.' During his screen test, Bill Cosby critiqued Warner's performance, giving him an opportunity to show his ability to take direction, which impressed director Jay Sandrich.

Student exchange programs--United States--California.

Racism in education--California.

Drama--Study and teaching--California--Inglewood.

African Americans--Television personalities--United States.

Cosby show (Television program : 1984-1992).

Television programs--Casting.

Video Oral History Interview with Malcolm-Jamal Warner, Section A2008_070_001_003, TRT: 0:29:32 2008/04/02

Malcolm-Jamal Warner was cast as Theo Huxtable on 'The Cosby Show' and moved to New York City with his mother, Pamela Warner. After the show was picked up for more episodes than originally anticipated, Warner transferred from Paul Revere Junior High School in Los Angeles, California to the Professional Children's School in New York City. Warner and his co-stars, Lisa Bonet, Tempestt Bledsoe and Keisha Knight Pulliam, developed a close bond while filming. He improved his acting skills with the help of his acting coach, Gary Veney, and his older cast mates, Phylicia Rashad and Bill Cosby. As the show became popular, Warner received fan letters from thousands of African American children who thanked the show for portraying the culturally ignored middle class. Warner experienced newfound fame as a teenage actor, but stayed down to earth, and maintained a close relationship with his mother. He remembers the addition of Sabrina Le Beauf as Sondra Huxtable, and Cosby's struggles to keep creative control of the show.

Sandrich, Jay.

African American teenagers.

African Americans on television.

Professional Children's School (New York, N.Y.).

Cosby show (Television program : 1984-1992).

Video Oral History Interview with Malcolm-Jamal Warner, Section A2008_070_001_004, TRT: 0:29:05 2008/04/02

Malcolm-Jamal Warner starred in 'The Cosby Show' alongside many guest stars such as B. B. King, Nancy Wilson and Stevie Wonder. When he was fifteen years old, Warner's mother, Pamela Warner, became his manager, and involved him in all business transactions. Though the cast originally predicted 'The Cosby Show' would run for five seasons, the show lasted eight seasons. When the series concluded in 1992, Warner starred in the short-lived sitcom 'Here and Now,' of which Bill Cosby served as executive producer. The show failed due to a lack of

support from NBC. After a few years of acting in films like 'The Tuskegee Airmen' and 'Drop Zone,' Warner returned to television in 1996 on 'Malcolm and Eddie.' Following in Bill Cosby's footsteps, he fought for the new show to portray a more positive view of African Americans. Warner remembers Raven-Symone's debut on 'The Cosby Show,' and the death of Cosby's son, Ennis Cosby, in 1997, who was the inspiration for Warner's character, Theo Huxtable.

Raven, 1985-.

Cosby show (Television program : 1984-1992).

Gillespie, Dizzy, 1917-1993.

Cosby, Bill, 1937-.

African American television personalities--Interviews.

Stereotypes (Social psychology) on television.

National Broadcasting Company.

Cosby, Ennis William.

Video Oral History Interview with Malcolm-Jamal Warner, Section A2008_070_001_005, TRT: 0:10:58 2008/04/02

Malcolm-Jamal Warner learned to play the bass guitar as a distraction from the pressures of filming 'Malcolm and Eddie.' Warner took classes at the Musicians Institute in Los Angeles, California, and eventually formed the band, Miles Long. The band's musical style was inspired by Warner's love of spoken word poetry. He shares his advice to aspiring artists, and his hopes for the African American community. Warner also reflects upon his future career aspirations and his legacy.

Musicians Institute.

African American jazz musicians--California.

African American communities.