

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with George L. Miles, Jr.

---

## 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>	Miles, George L., 1941-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with George L. Miles, Jr.,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 12, 2008
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2008
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:23:30).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Broadcast executive George L. Miles, Jr. (1941 - ) was the president and CEO of WQED Multimedia, a public broadcasting media company which encompasses WQED-TV, WQEX-TV, WQED-FM and PITTSBURGH magazine. Miles was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 12, 2008, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2008_103
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

George L. Miles, Jr. was born on November 13, 1941 in Orange, New Jersey. He is one of Eula and George Miles' seven children. In 1963, Miles earned his B.A. degree in accounting from Seton Hall University and his M.B.A. from Fairleigh Dickinson University in 1970. He also became a New Jersey-licensed certified public accountant in 1972.

Following his graduation from Seton Hall University, Miles worked for the Department of Defense for six years in the Defense Audit Agency as a contract

auditor during President Kennedy and President Johnson's terms in office. In 1969, Miles began work with Touche Ross & Company in New York City. In 1972, he left as an audit manager. While at Touche Ross, Miles studied at Fairleigh Dickinson University to earn his M.B.A. He joined KDKA-TV/DKDA-AM/WPNT in 1978, working as a business manager and controller. From 1981 through 1984, Miles served as station manager for WBZ-TV in Boston. In 1983, assigned by Westinghouse Broadcasting, Miles served as Chief Administrative Officer for National Public Radio (NPR), in order to analyze, develop and execute plans and procedures which allowed NPR to obtain relief from fiscal difficulties. Between 1984 and 1994, Miles became Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer of WNET/13 in New York. In 1994, Miles was appointed President and CEO of WQED Multimedia, a public broadcasting media company which encompasses WQED-TV, WQEX-TV, WQED-FM and *PITTSBURGH* magazine.

Miles has received Honorary Doctorates from Robert Morris University, La Roche College and St. Joseph's College. He is also a recipient of the Pinnacle Award for Outstanding Achievement as an alumnus of Fairleigh Dickinson University. In 2006, *The New Pittsburgh Courier* named him one of the "Fifty Most Influential African-Americans." Miles was also the 2007 Recipient of the Point Park University Performing Arts Partnership & Achievement Award.

Miles sits on the boards of American International Group, Inc.; Chester Engineers, Inc.; Equitable Resources, Inc.; Harley-Davidson, Inc.; HFF, Inc. and WESCO International, Inc. He also served as a former Chairman of the Urban League of Pittsburgh.

Miles lives in Pittsburgh and is married to Janet L. Miles. They have a daughter, Tammy and granddaughter, Taylor.

Miles was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 12, 2008.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with George L. Miles, Jr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 12, 2008, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Broadcast executive George L. Miles, Jr. (1941 - ) was the president and CEO of WQED Multimedia, a public broadcasting media company which encompasses WQED-TV, WQEX-TV, WQED-FM and *PITTSBURGH* magazine.

---

# 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:**

Miles, George L., 1941-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### **Subjects:**

## **Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

WQED Multimedia

---

## **Occupations:**

Broadcast Executive

---

## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

MediaMakers

---

## **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 George L. Miles, Jr., August 12, 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 George L. Miles, Jr., Section A2008\_103\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:40 2008/08/12

George L. Miles, Jr. was born on November 13, 1941 in Orange, New Jersey to Eula Caesar Miles and George L. Miles, Sr. Miles' maternal family included singers Dionne Warwick and Cissy Houston, and originated in Blakely, Georgia, where Miles' mother was born. She moved north at a young age, and settled with her mother, Victoria Caesar, in New Jersey. There, Miles' mother eventually left school to work as a domestic. Miles' father was born in Orange, where he was raised primarily by his grandmother, Mary Dawson, because his mother was often absent and his father disowned him. Needing to find a job to help support the family, Miles' father passed as white to secure a position at the Otis Elevator Company. He was initially hired as a machinist, and eventually became a foreman as well as the union vice president. In Orange, Miles' parents raised him and his six siblings in a shotgun house, before moving to a nearby public housing development.

Video Oral History Interview with George L. Miles, Jr., Section A2008\_103\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:00 2008/08/12

George L Miles, Jr. moved to a newly built housing project in Orange, New Jersey in 1954, when he was

eleven years old. At that time, his parents, Eula Caesar Miles and George L. Miles, Sr., worked multiple jobs to provide for the family, and also received aid from the government. The community within the housing project was close-knit and racially diverse, and included Irish and Italian immigrants as well as African Americans from the South. Miles began his education at the all-black Oakwood Avenue School in Orange, and went on to attend the integrated Lincoln Avenue School and Orange High School. Throughout his school years, he delivered newspapers for the Newark Star-Ledger, shined shoes and set pins at the local bowling alley to provide for his family. Outside of school and work, Miles visited New York City, where he attended Jackie Robinson's baseball games, and served as the manager of his cousin's doo wop group, The Kodaks.

Video Oral History Interview with George L. Miles, Jr., Section  
A2008\_103\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:10 2008/08/12

George L. Miles, Jr. aspired to become a certified public accountant, and enrolled in 1959 at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey. Needing to cover the cost of tuition, Miles obtained government loans, worked with his father at the Otis Elevator Company and as a counselor at the local YMCA. At Seton Hall University, Miles was a member of the accounting club and the white business fraternity, Alpha Kappa Psi Fraternity. After graduating in 1963, he struggled to find work, as many white firms were unwilling to hire an African American as a certified public accountant. Instead, he obtained a position at the Defense Contract Audit Agency of the U.S. Department of Defense, where he worked until being drafted into the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. After his discharge, Miles accepted an accounting position at Touche Ross and Co., where his clients included the City of New York and the New York City Board of Education. Following this experience, Miles shifted his career to the broadcasting industry.

Video Oral History Interview with George L. Miles, Jr., Section  
A2008\_103\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:10 2008/08/12

George L Miles, Jr. became the business manager and comptroller of KDKA-TV in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in

1978. Two years later, he was recruited by the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company to restructure their newly acquired station, WPCQ-TV in Charlotte, North Carolina. He went on to work for the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company at several commercial stations in the New England area. Miles made the transition from commercial broadcasting to public broadcasting in 1983, when he was hired to reorganize the National Public Radio (NPR), which was suffering a fiscal crisis due to federal budget cuts. After installing chief financial officer H. Melvin Ming at NPR, Miles became the chief operating officer of New York City's WNET-TV station. Then, in 1994, he made the transition to Pittsburgh's WQED Multimedia, which was close to bankruptcy at the time. Through Miles' leadership, the station became one of the most successful public media companies in the United States.

Video Oral History Interview with George L. Miles, Jr., Section  
A2008\_103\_001\_005, TRT: 0:26:30 2008/08/12

George L. Miles, Jr. produced numerous educational and community based programs as the president and CEO of WQED Multimedia in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In 2006, WQED-TV created 'The War That Made America,' a documentary film about the French and Indian War that cost over \$14 million to produce. Miles played a key role in organizing the logistics of the film and raising the necessary funds. WQED-TV was also the home of the popular children's show 'Mister Rogers' Neighborhood,' which starred Fred Rogers; and produced programs like 'Black Horizons,' 'OnQ Magazine' and 'Doo Wop 50,' which was the Public Broadcast Services' highest grossing fundraiser at the time. Miles talks about the future of WQED Multimedia, and its reputation as a model for other public broadcasting stations. Miles also describes his concerns for the African American community and how he would like to be remembered, and concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.