

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Earl Ofari Hutchinson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Hutchinson, Earl Ofari
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Earl Ofari Hutchinson,
Dates:	September 20, 2008
Bulk Dates:	2008
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:55:00).
Abstract:	Author and political analyst Earl Ofari Hutchinson (1945 -) wrote op-ed columns that appeared in the L.A. Times, Washington Post, Chicago Tribune and Christian Science Monitor. Hutchinson was an associate editor of New America Media, the country's first and largest national collaboration of 2,000 ethnic news organizations; wrote for the Huffington Post; and was a frequent talk show guest. Hutchinson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 20, 2008, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2008_116
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Earl Ofari Hutchinson was born on October 8, 1945, in Chicago, Illinois. He is the son of Earl Hutchinson, a postal worker, and Nina Brown Hutchinson. Hutchinson received his B.S. degree in psychology from California State College, Los Angeles; his M.A. degree in humanities from California State University, Dominguez Hills; and his Ph.D. in sociology from Pacific Western University.

Hutchinson began his career in radio, working at KPFK Radio in Pacifica, California. In 1982, Hutchinson began a subscription newsletter, Ofari's Bi-Monthly, which discussed political and social issues. He published this newsletter for twelve years. Hutchinson would go on to write for several newspapers and magazines, including the Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Chronicle, Black World, Ebony, Essence, Newsday, Nation, Harper's, and Emerge. Hutchinson is the author of many books including, *The Myth of Black Capitalism* (1970); *Black Fatherhood I and II* (1992 & 1994); *Betrayed: A History of Presidential Failure to Protect Black Lives* (1996); *The Crisis in Black and Black* (1998); *The Latino Challenge to Black America: Towards a Conversation Between African Americans and Hispanics* (2007); and *The Ethnic Presidency: How Race Decides the Race to the White House* (2008). Since 2005, Hutchinson has been a writer and a blogger for The Huffington Post news website and a frequent guest on numerous talk shows. His op-ed columns appear in the Los Angeles Times, Washington Post, Chicago Tribune, Christian Science Monitor, and many other major newspapers. He is a frequent commentator for the American Urban Broadcast Network and Ed Gordon's News and Notes on NPR. He is a featured columnist for BlackNews.com, BlackAmericaWeb.com, and Altnet.org. Hutchinson is also associate editor of New America Media, the country's first and largest national collaboration and advocate of 2,000 ethnic news organizations.

As director of the National Alliance for Positive Action, Hutchinson has voiced his desire to have the word "nigger" eliminated from the Merriam-Webster dictionary. As a part of the Coalition Against Media Exploitation, Hutchinson convinced President Clinton to pardon African American sailors charged in the "Port Chicago Mutiny." Hutchinson is the recipient of the Outstanding Book Award from the Gustavus Myers Center for the Study of Human Rights in 1995 and 1997.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Earl Ofari Hutchinson was conducted by Larry Crowe on September 20, 2008, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Author and political analyst Earl Ofari Hutchinson (1945 -) wrote op-ed columns that appeared in the L.A. Times, Washington Post, Chicago Tribune and Christian Science Monitor. Hutchinson was an associate editor of New America Media, the country's first and largest national collaboration of 2,000 ethnic news organizations; wrote for the Huffington Post; and was a frequent talk show guest.

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:

Hutchinson, Earl Ofari

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Hutchinson, Earl Ofari--Interviews

African American journalists--Interviews

African American authors--Interviews

African American editors--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

New American Media

Occupations:

Political Analyst

Author

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 Earl Ofari Hutchinson, September 20, 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 Earl Ofari Hutchinson, Section A2008_116_001_001, TRT: 0:27:30 2008/09/20

Earl Ofari Hutchinson was born on October 8, 1945 in Chicago, Illinois to Nina Brown Hutchinson and Earl Hutchinson. His mother was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where his maternal ancestors were Cherokee Native Americans who had migrated from the South. Hutchinson's mother lived with her family in Iowa; Omaha, Nebraska; Northern Missouri; and Quincy, Illinois, where they eventually settled. While Hutchinson's mother aspired to be a doctor, she worked instead at an insurance company in Los Angeles, California, and a garment company in Chicago. Due to her fair complexion, she had the ability to pass, although she chose not to.

Once, her coworkers, who assumed she was white, spoke negatively about African Americans in front of her. As a result, she decided to quit. Hutchinson's father was born in 1903 in Jackson, Tennessee. When he was a child, he and his family moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where there were greater employment opportunities. There, Hutchinson's grandfather worked as a cook and a caterer.

African American journalists--Interviews.

African American authors--Interviews.

African American editors--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Earl Ofari Hutchinson, Section A2008_116_001_002, TRT: 0:29:20 2008/09/20

Earl Ofari Hutchinson's father grew up in segregated St. Louis, Missouri, where he attended Frederick Douglass High School. In Chicago, Illinois, he met Hutchinson's mother at a church dance. He also had a long-term career with the U.S. postal service. As a child, Hutchinson lived with his family on the South Side of Chicago. Through a proxy, his father bought a house on Greenwood Avenue. However, due to racial discrimination, he and Hutchinson were initially unable to live there. Instead, Hutchinson's mother and grandmother, who were fair-skinned, lived in the home until it was safe for Hutchinson's father to move in. Over time, as black families populated the neighborhood, white families left. In the 1950s, Hutchinson and his parents traveled cross country, from Chicago to Los Angeles, California. At stops along Route 66, Hutchinson's mother retrieved food, while Hutchinson and his father waited in the car. Hutchinson had an older sister, and a half-brother from his mother's previous marriage.

Video Oral History Interview with Earl Ofari Hutchinson, Section A2008_116_001_003, TRT: 0:25:30 2008/09/20

Earl Ofari Hutchinson began his education at Holy Cross School, a Catholic elementary school on the South Side of Chicago, Illinois. As a child, his favorite subjects were history and geography. He then attended St. Dorothy's School, followed by Mount Carmel High School. Hutchinson enjoyed playing basketball and football, and was active in the Boys Clubs of America. In 1961, his

family moved to Los Angeles, California's Leimert Park neighborhood, where his father challenged the city's discriminatory housing practices, in conjunction with the California Association of Real Estate Brokers. At Susan Miller Dorsey High School, Hutchinson joined the football and track teams, becoming the Southern League shot put champion. He also took a choir class, along with classmates Marilyn McCoo and Billy Preston. While he received athletic scholarships to state universities in Oregon, he enrolled at Los Angeles City College in 1964. There, he became interested in politics at the time of the 1964 U.S. presidential race.

Video Oral History Interview with Earl Ofari Hutchinson, Section A2008_116_001_004, TRT: 0:31:10 2008/09/20

Earl Ofari Hutchinson attended Los Angeles City College, a junior college in Los Angeles, California. There, he witnessed the Watts riots, and the 1964 U.S. presidential race, between Lyndon Baines Johnson and Barry Goldwater. Upon earning his associate's degree, he matriculated at California State College at Los Angeles where he became active in the black studies movement, and helped establish the college's Black Student Union and the Department of Pan-African Studies. At this time, he frequented Alfred Ligon and Bernice Ligon's Aquarian Book Shop and Spiritual Center in Los Angeles. He also attended lectures by Maulana Karenga, founder of Los Angeles' African American Cultural Center. In 1965, he learned of Malcom X's death during a speech given by Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth at Trinity Baptist Church in Los, Angeles. He later met activist Ralph Abernathy and politician Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Hutchinson remembers the violent standoff between the Black Panther Party and The Organization US in Los Angeles.

Video Oral History Interview with Earl Ofari Hutchinson, Section A2008_116_001_005, TRT: 0:30:40 2008/09/20

Earl Ofari Hutchinson began his master's and doctoral work in African American studies at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, at the suggestion of James Turner, who was instrumental in founding the Africana Studies and Research Center there in 1970. He returned to Los Angeles, California before completing his degree.

Hutchinson began working for the Los Angeles Free Press, where he interviewed figures like activist and entertainer Dick Gregory and Julian Bond. He then hosted sports and jazz shows for KPFK Radio, interviewing musicians Herbie Hancock and Bob Marley. In 1971, Monthly Review published his work, 'The Myth of Black Capitalism.' With the support of John Henrik Clarke, one of his professors at Cornell, he published 'Let Your Motto Be Resistance,' a biography about Henry Highland Garnet. After a decade at KPFK Radio, he became a consultant and safety engineer for the State Compensation Insurance Fund. He returned to writing in the mid-1980s, publishing his newsletter, 'Ofari's Bi-monthly.'

Video Oral History Interview with Earl Ofari Hutchinson, Section A2008_116_001_006, TRT: 0:30:50 2008/09/20

Earl Ofari Hutchinson's field position at the State Compensation Insurance Fund allowed him time to also pursue his writing career. In the early 1990s, Hutchinson wrote 'The Mugging of Black America,' then 'Black Fatherhood: The Guide to Male Parenting,' featuring interviews with black men from diverse household. Inspired by the high-profile cases of figures like Mike Tyson and O.J. Simpson, he published 'Beyond O.J.: Race, Sex, and Class Lessons for America.' In 1995, he published 'Blacks and Reds: Race and Class in Conflict, 1919-1990' that addressed the relationship between the Communist Party and black America. Westview Press published 'Betrayed: A History of Presidential Failure To Protect Black Lives,' which he considers his best academic work. He also wrote books on African Americans in the Republican Party, and in the White House. As a political analyst, he appeared on programs on CNN and MSNBC, as well as on 'The O'Reilly Factor.' He and his wife founded the publishing house, Middle Passage Press.