Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616
           info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator: Bryant, John
Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with John Hope Bryant,
Dates: December 3, 2008
Bulk Dates: 2008
Physical Description: 3 Betacam SP videocassettes (1:11:50).
Abstract: Entrepreneur John Hope Bryant (1966 - ) is the founder of Operation HOPE, and the
author of Banking on our Future: A Program for Teaching You and your Kids about Money. He was appointed by President George W. Bush to a four-year term on the non-partisan U.S. Community Development Advisory Board for the CDFI Fund at the U.S. Treasury Department. Bryant was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 3, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification: A2008_144
Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Nonprofit chief executive, author, activist and entrepreneur John Hope Bryant was born on February 6, 1966 in Los Angeles, California to Juanita Smith and Johnnie Will Smith. Bryant was raised primarily in Compton and in the South Central area of Los Angeles. He graduated from Santa Monica High School in 1984.

At the age of twenty-six, Bryant founded Operation HOPE immediately following the L.A. Riots of 1992 when the LAPD police officers charged with beating Rodney King were acquitted. Operation HOPE, Inc. is a non-profit, public benefit, investment banking organization. The organization is composed, in part, of a national network of inner-city banking centers called HOPE Centers, serving low-wealth communities by offering hope and converting check cashing customers to banking customers. These centers also provide financial literacy education. Bryant is also the author of "Banking on our Future: a Program for Teaching You and your Kids about Money" (2002). In 2004, Bryant was appointed by President George W. Bush to a 4-year term on the non-partisan U.S. Community Development Advisory Board for the CDFI Fund at the U.S. Treasury Department.

Bryant serves on the board of trustees for the First A.M.E. Church in Los Angeles, the national board for the Black Leadership Forum, the board of visitors for Xavier University, the board of governors for the City Club on Bunker Hill, the board of directors of the Southern California Committee for the Olympic Games, the national honorary board for the Underground Railroad Freedom Center, and the board of the John & Sheila Kennedy-Bryant Family Foundation. Bryant is also the namesake of the John Bryant Scholarship in Urban Social Development, a permanent scholarship fund, established and set aside to fund the dreams of deserving minority and low-wealth young adults at the University of Southern California’s School of Social Work.

Bryant has received more than 400 awards and citations for his work to empower low-wealth communities
including the Use Your Life Award from Oprah Winfrey. In 1994, Bryant was selected by "TIME" Magazine for their “America’s 50 Most Promising Leaders of the Future” cover story. He became the first African American in history to be knighted by German nobility and the royal House of Lippe in 1998. He was named a “Community Hero” by "People" Magazine on the 10th anniversary of the L.A. Riots of 1992. Bryant received an Honorary Doctorate Degree of Human Letters from Paul Quinn College in Dallas, Texas, for his work around education and poverty eradication. The World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland nominated Bryant as one of 238 young leaders selected from around the world to serve as a member of the new Forum of Young Global Leaders. Bryant received the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Excellence in Leadership Award at the 38th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Awards Dinner in Chicago, Illinois.

Bryant resides in Los Angeles with his wife Sheila Jenine Kennedy-Bryant.

Bryant was interviewed by "The HistoryMakers" on December 3, 2008.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with John Hope Bryant was conducted by Sasha Dalton on December 3, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 3 Betacam SP videocassettes. Entrepreneur John Hope Bryant (1966 - ) is the founder of Operation HOPE, and the author of Banking on our Future: A Program for Teaching You and your Kids about Money. He was appointed by President George W. Bush to a four-year term on the non-partisan U.S. Community Development Advisory Board for the CDFI Fund at the U.S. Treasury Department.

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:

John Hope Bryant
Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers ® Video Oral History with John Hope Bryant

Dalton, Sasha (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

**Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews
John Hope Bryant--Interviews


African American families--California--Compton.

African American businesspeople.

**Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

**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**


**Processing Information**

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 6/19/2012 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, December 3, 2008**

Video Oral History Interview with John Hope Bryant, Section A2008_144_001_001, TRT: 0:28:15

2008/12/03

John Hope Bryant was born in Los Angeles, California on February 6, 1966. Bryant’s mother, Juanita Murray was born in Mississippi and raised in East St. Louis, Missouri. She only had an 8th grade education but she became financially literate and built a successful life for herself and her family. Bryant’s father, Johnny Will Smith, grew up in the South, met his wife in East St. Louis, Missouri and they moved to Los Angeles, California. Although Mr. and Mrs. Bryant eventually divorced, they built wealth in Los Angeles and provided a relatively stable and loving environment for their children.

African American children--Education (Elementary)--California--Los Angeles.
African American families--California--Los Angeles.
Divorce--United States.
African American businesspeople – California – Los Angeles.

Video Oral History Interview with John Hope Bryant, Section A2008_144_001_002, TRT: 0:28:40

2008/12/03

John Hope Bryant grew up with his South Central Los Angeles and Compton, California, with his older brother and older sister. He attended Colin P. Kelly Elementary School and Wiley Junior High School. Bryant initially attended high school at the Hollywood Professional School, designed for young celebrities to obtain formal education. When Bryant’s father stopped paying the school’s tuition, he attended Santa Monica High School. He did not feel like he was being challenged at this high school, so he decided to get his GED in order to bypass the traditional high school experience. Bryant and his family faithfully attended Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist Church.

African American fathers--Influence--Vocational guidance.
African American high school students--California.
Hollywood Professional School.

Video Oral History Interview with John Hope Bryant, Section A2008_144_001_003, TRT: 0:14:55

2008/12/03

In 1984, John Hope Bryant began taking classes at Los Angeles City College. He dropped out when he did not feel like he was being challenged, and pursued a career in acting, without much success. Bryant went on to a series of jobs and business ventures, most of them ending poorly. The biggest entrepreneurial flop was Bryant Concerts Group, when Bryant’s failure to generate large audiences for the former Platters vocalist, J.C. Parrish, resulted in the business going under and Bryant becoming homeless for six months. Bryant’s sense of spirituality was derailed with his childhood church, Mt Calvary Baptist Church in South Central Los Angles, but restored with Rev. Dr. Cecil Trip Murray’s leadership at the First African Methodist Episcopal Church, in 1992.
African American churches--California--Los Angeles.
Acting – California – Los Angeles
African American business enterprises – California – Los Angeles
Spirituality