

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

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Bryant, John, 1966-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with John Hope Bryant,
Dates:	December 3, 2008
Bulk Dates:	2008
Physical Description:	3 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:11:50).
Abstract:	Entrepreneur John Hope Bryant (1966 -) was the founder of Operation HOPE, and the author of <i>Banking on our Future: A Program for Teaching You and your Kids about Money</i> . 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 Betacame SP videocassettes. Entrepreneur John Hope Bryant (1966 -) was 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:

Bryant, John, 1966-

Dalton, Sasha (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Bryant, John, 1966- --Interviews

African American families--Illinois--East Saint Louis.

African American families--California--Compton.

African American businesspeople.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Entrepreneur

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 John Hope Bryant, December 3, 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 5/30/2023 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 John Hope Bryant, Section A2008_144_001_001, TRT: 0:28:15 ?

John Hope Bryant was born on February 6, 1966 in Los Angeles, California to Juanita Murray Smith and Johnie Will Smith. His mother was born in Mississippi, and raised by her mother in East St. Louis, Illinois. She worked to support the family, including her sisters; and learned to manage money at an early age because of her mother's gambling problem. Bryant's father was born in Mississippi, and owned a café in Flint, Michigan in the late 1950s. Later, he married Bryant's mother, and moved with her to Los Angeles, California. Bryant's parents, who had only an eighth grade education, owned a gas station, an eight-unit apartment building, a cement contracting business and their home by 1971. They often fought about finances, and divorced when Bryant was five years old. He lived with his mother and two older siblings until he was twelve years old, when he moved to live with his father. While working at his father's contracting company, he came to aspire to a career in business.

African American children--Education (Elementary)--California--Los Angeles.

African American families--California--Los Angeles.

Divorce--United States.

African American businesspeople – California – Los Angeles.

East St. Louis (Ill.) – Social Conditions – 20th Century.

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

John Hope Bryant was raised by his mother, Juanita Murray Smith, in Compton, California. She sold clothes and food to her coworkers at The Boeing Company; while Bryant's father, Johnie Will Smith, ran a construction business. Their entrepreneurship influenced Bryant's aspiration to become a businessman. At ten years old, he wore suits and a briefcase, and sold mail order shoes at Colin P. Kelly Elementary School. He worked briefly as a candy salesman at a local store; and then launched his own candy business, which generated three hundred dollars per week. In 1978, Bryant moved to his father's home in the South Central neighborhood of Los Angeles, California. He convinced his father to allow him to enroll at a business high school, but accidentally applied to the Hollywood Professional School for child actors. Bryant had a brief television career, including small roles on 'Diff'rent Strokes' and 'Black Sunday.' After two years, he transferred to Santa Monica High School, and worked to graduate early.

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
?

John Hope Bryant earned a GED degree in 1984 at Santa Monica High School in Santa Monica, California. He also completed one year at Santa Monica City College, but was more focused on his business ventures than his education. Bryant aspired to become a CEO; and, at eighteen years old, founded Bryant Group Concerts, where his first client was J.C. Parrish from The Platters. However, Bryant was unable to recruit more customers, and was homeless for six months after the venture failed. He later worked at The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company and Wade Carter and Company, a private banking firm; but mostly engaged in entrepreneurial activities. In addition, Bryant remembers the New Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, where he was disillusioned by the pastor's corruption and ineptitude. He decided to forego religion for many years; but, as an adult, joined Reverend Cecil L. "Chip" Murray's congregation at the First African Methodist Episcopal Church in Los Angeles.

African American churches--California--Los Angeles.

Acting – California – Los Angeles

African American business enterprises – California – Los Angeles

Spirituality