

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Imam Vernon Fareed

Overview of the Collection

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| Repository: | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com |
| Creator: | Fareed, Vernon, 1953-2017 |
| Title: | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Imam Vernon Fareed, |
| Dates: | May 12, 2010 |
| Bulk Dates: | 2010 |
| Physical Description: | 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:51:21). |
| Abstract: | Civic and religious leader and imam Imam Vernon Fareed (1953 - 2017) was the distinguished leader of the Masjid William Salaam and has won many awards for his work in the community including the VCIC's Humanitarian Award in 2007. Fareed was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 12, 2010, in Norfolk, Virginia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| Identification: | A2010_019 |
| Language: | The interview and records are in English. |

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civic and religious leader Vernon M. Fareed was born on December 31, 1953 in Norfolk, Virginia. Throughout his childhood, his parents instilled strong values that followed him through his life, despite segregation. Raised a Christian, he joined the Nation of Islam at the age of eighteen. He converted to the traditional form of Islam in 1975.

In 2000, Fareed became a member of the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities (VCIC). He went on to become the chair of the Tidewater Chapter and serve on its state board. In 2005 Imam Fareed became the first Muslim of African-American descent to offer the invocation for the Virginia State Senate. Fareed also wrote for the New Journal and Guide newspaper in 1983 as a columnist, and he currently serves as the Manager and President of Salaam Investment Group, LLC. Since 1976, Fareed has been the Imam of Masjid [Mosque] William Salaam which helps to serve almost 6,000 Muslims in the Hampton Roads' community.

For his religious work, Fareed received an Honorary Doctoral Degree from Bishop Jessie Featherston at Trinity Mission University in 1997. He also received VCIC's National Humanitarian Award in 2006 for his community involvement. Fareed has served on many boards including the Ministers Advisory Committee to Norfolk's Police Chief, the FBI Multi-Cultural Advisory Board and Religions for Peace RFP-USA, the largest representative interreligious organization in the world. In addition, he was selected as the National Convener of the Sectional Imams in 2009. Fareed wrote the spiritual book *Uniformity in Prayer* published in 2008.

Vernon Fareed was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 12, 2010.

Fareed passed away on September 12, 2017 at age 63.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Imam Vernon Fareed was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 12, 2010, in Norfolk, Virginia, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Civic and religious leader and imam Imam Vernon Fareed (1953 - 2017) was the distinguished leader of the Masjid William Salaam and has won many awards for his work in the community including the VCIC's Humanitarian Award in 2007.

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:

Fareed, Vernon, 1953-2017

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Fareed, Vernon, 1953-2017 --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Civic Leader

Imam

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers|ReligionMakers

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 Imam Vernon Fareed, May 12, 2010. 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 Imam Vernon Fareed, Section A2010_019_001_001, TRT: 0:28:22 ?

Imam Vernon Fareed was born on December 31, 1953 in Norfolk, Virginia to Minnie Burts Hood and Samuel Hood, Sr. Fareed traced his paternal ancestry to Irish immigrants that came to America before the founding of the United States. His paternal great-great-great-great grandfather, John Hood, was a free soldier of

color in the Revolutionary War, and had several sons who served under President Andrew Jackson in the War of 1812 and the First Seminole War. Many years later, Fareed's parents were born to farming families in the rural community of Piedmont in Greenville County, South Carolina. They grew up during the Great Depression; and, after marrying, worked as sharecroppers in Greenville County. Later in their marriage, they moved to Norfolk, where Fareed's father secured a position on the Norfolk and Western Railway, and later in the Norfolk Public Schools. Fareed's mother worked at a laundry, and often left him in the care of his older sister, Lomena Hood Johnson.

Video Oral History Interview with Imam Vernon Fareed, Section A2010_019_001_002, TRT: 0:29:52 ?

Imam Vernon Fareed grew up in the Lambert's Point section of Norfolk, Virginia. His father, Samuel Hood, Sr., worked as a carpenter for the Norfolk Public Schools, and was also an avid vegetable gardener. Fareed's family belonged to the congregation of the local Baptist church, where they were known for their singing talent. Fareed was part of the Busy Bees youth choir, and was taught by his paternal uncle, Clyde Hood, at Sunday school. During these lessons, Fareed questioned his religious beliefs for the first time. Outside of church, Fareed began his education at Norfolk's Smallwood School, and went on to attend James Madison Junior High School during the mid-1960s. There, he noticed a lack of black representation in the history curriculum, and brought his concerns to the superintendent of the Norfolk Public Schools. Fareed graduated from Norfolk's Matthew Fontaine Maury High School, and later matriculated at the local Old Dominion University.

Video Oral History Interview with Imam Vernon Fareed, Section A2010_019_001_003, TRT: 0:28:58 ?

Imam Vernon Fareed attended James Madison Junior High School in Norfolk, Virginia. There, he campaigned for a position in the student government; and, at twelve years old, gave a presentation about the suppression of black history to the superintendent of the Norfolk Public Schools. Fareed went on to join one of the first integrated classes at the formerly all-white Matthew Fontaine Maury High School, where he took business courses sponsored by the Distributive Education Clubs of America. Around this time, Fareed began to learn about the teachings of the Nation of Islam, including the stricture against pork consumption, from homeless street preachers in Norfolk. After graduating, he found work at the Naval Station Norfolk; and, at the age of twenty years old, joined the Nation of Islam. He enrolled in the Fruit of Islam program at the temple on Church Street in Norfolk; and, after meeting black psychologist Na'im Akbar, began to consider attending college.

Video Oral History Interview with Imam Vernon Fareed, Section A2010_019_001_004, TRT: 0:28:23 ?

Imam Vernon Fareed joined the Fruit of Islam at the Nation of Islam's temple number fifty-seven in Norfolk, Virginia. During his early years as a member of the Nation of Islam, Fareed adhered to the teachings of Elijah Muhammad, who preached a strict lifestyle without alcohol, pork or cigarettes, and required his followers to sell fish, bean pies and Muhammad Speaks newspapers. Fareed also learned the story of Yakub, a scientist who used a technique called grafting to create white people and the devil. After Elijah Muhammad's death in 1975, his son, Warith Deen Mohammed, steered the black Muslim community toward a more traditional Islamic faith. In response, Minister Louis Farrakhan broke from the church, and revived Elijah Muhammad's original teachings. Like many former members of the Nation of Islam, Fareed chose to follow Warith Deen

Mohammed; and, with his guidance, began studying a translation of the Qu'ran that was influenced by the Ahmadiyya movement and the Sunni faith.

Video Oral History Interview with Imam Vernon Fareed, Section A2010_019_001_005, TRT: 0:28:48 ?

Imam Vernon Fareed joined the Nation of Islam in the early 1970s, and was soon encouraged to become a minister. After Warith Deen Mohammed dismantled the Nation of Islam, Fareed studied to become an imam under James Shabazz, and helped prepare a translation to accompany Mohammed's new commentary on the Qu'ran. In 1983, Fareed attended a meeting at the Palmer House Hotel in Chicago, Illinois, where he talked about the future of Islam in the United States with Muslim leaders from throughout the world. He went on to become the imam of his mosque, and focused his ministry on interfaith outreach. Fareed founded organizations like Abraham's Children Together and Nexus, which was located at Virginia Wesleyan University in Norfolk, Virginia. He also served on the board of the Norfolk Education Foundation, and the Tidewater Chapter of the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities. In the early 2000s, he became the first African American Muslim to lead the Senate of Virginia's invocation prayer.

Video Oral History Interview with Imam Vernon Fareed, Section A2010_019_001_006, TRT: 0:26:58 ?

Imam Vernon Fareed wrote the Muslim prayer book 'Uniformity in Prayer' at the request of his teacher, Warith Deen Mohammed. The book was later republished in a more comprehensive edition. In 1996, Fareed performed the hajj to Mecca, which was one of the five pillars of the Muslim faith. Later, he travelled to Rome, Italy, where he established a relationship between the African American Muslim community and the Focolare Movement, a Catholic organization that espoused universal brotherhood. After Warith Deen Mohammed's death in 2008, Fareed took on his role as an international representative of the African American Muslim community. He also continued working on Mohammed's translation and commentary on the Qu'ran. Fareed describes his plans for the future, which included developing a theater at Masjid William Salaam and coauthoring a book on marriage with his wife, Swiyyah K. Fareed. He also reflects upon his life and legacy, his hopes for the black community and how he would like to be remembered.