

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Myron Lowery

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Lowery, Myron, 1946-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Myron Lowery,
Dates:	July 27, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:27:25).
Abstract:	Television anchor, city council member, and mayor Myron Lowery (1946 -) has served in Memphis city government for nineteen years, pioneered African American participation in television journalism, and paved the way for successful employee discrimination lawsuits by African Americans. Lowery was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 27, 2010, in Memphis, Tennessee. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_088
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

City Council Member and former Mayor pro tempore Myron Lowery was born in 1947, in Columbus, Ohio. He received his B.A. degree from LeMoyne-Owens College and his M.S. degree from New York University. While at New York University, he taught for three years in New York public school with the National Teachers' Corp. At Dr. Hollis Price's invitation, Lowery went to work as an anchor at WMC-TV in 1973, where he remained until 1983.

Lowery sued WMC-TV for racial discrimination in 1981, making a successful settlement that paved the way for many other employment discrimination suits by African Americans. He then went on to work as press secretary for Congressman Harold Ford Sr. and as manager of corporate relations at FedEx. In 1991, Lowery ran for Memphis City Council and won. Five years later, he was a speaker at the Democratic National Convention when President Bill Clinton won the Democratic primary. He also served as a superdelegate at the Democratic National Convention in 2008, at which Barack Obama won the Democratic primary. In his role on City Council, Lowery has initiated a successful gun buy-back program, the installation of red light cameras at busy intersections, and the reform of some of the City Council's discussion processes.

In 2009, the mayor of Memphis, Willie Wilbur Herenton, resigned from his post as mayor, leaving Lowery as mayor pro tempore for the next ninety days. During that time, Lowery sought to promote transparency in city government, asking many officials from Herenton's corrupt administration to resign.

Lowery is a member of the board of directors for the National League of Cities. He has been a member of the board of many civic organizations, including the Tennessee Municipal League, Leadership Memphis, The Memphis Zoo, and the Headstart Policies Council. He has also served as vice president of the National Association of Black Journalists, chairman of the Democratic Municipal Officials, and treasurer of the United Negroes' College Fund's National Alumni Council. He holds an honorary degree from Southeastern College of Technology. Lowery has been honored as one of the Three Outstanding Young Men in the state of Tennessee and Ten Outstanding Young Men in America by the Tennessee Jaycees, and in 2003, he was inducted into the National Black College Alumni Hall of Fame.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Myron Lowery was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 27, 2010, in Memphis, Tennessee, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Television anchor, city council member, and mayor Myron Lowery (1946 -) has served in Memphis city government for nineteen years, pioneered African American participation in television journalism, and paved the way for successful employee discrimination lawsuits by African Americans.

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:

Lowery, Myron, 1946-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Lowery, Myron, 1946---Interviews

African American politicians--Interviews.

African American television journalists--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Television Anchor

City Council Member

Mayor

HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers|PoliticalMakers

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 Myron Lowery, July 27, 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 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 Myron Lowery, Section
A2010_088_001_001, TRT: 0:28:27 2010/07/27

Myron Lowery describes his family's history. His mother, Mary Hill Lowery, was born in Columbus, Ohio, in December of 1927. Lowery traces his maternal ancestry to the 1700s in Jonesville, South Carolina, and the move from Jonesville to Columbus, where his great-grandparents, Lonnie and Zula (ph.) Goode, owned their own plastering business. His father, Myron Lewis Lowery, Sr., was born in August of 1926, and his family traces itself back to West Virginia. Lowery talks about his parents' estrangement, his father's service in the U.S. Navy during World War II, and career in General Motors in Cleveland, Ohio. He and his three younger brothers were raised by their mother in Poindexter Village, a small public housing project in Columbus. Lowery describes growing up very poor, and his pursuit of an education as a way out of poverty. He also talks about the influence of his

great-grandfather, Lonnie Goode, his memories of growing up in Poindexter Village, and how he began his career in journalism.

African American families.

African American mothers.

African American fathers.

Poindexter Village (Columbus, Ohio).

Childhood and youth--Ohio--Columbus.

Poverty.

Video Oral History Interview with Myron Lowery, Section
A2010_088_001_002, TRT: 0:27:16 2010/07/27

Myron Lowery was raised on the East Side of Columbus, Ohio, where he and his three younger brothers lived with their mother in the Poindexter Village public housing project. Lowery attended Douglas Elementary School, St. Cyprian Catholic School, St. Dominic Catholic School, Mohawk Junior High School and East High School. He became interested in extemporaneous speaking while in high school. Lowery also talks about his job delivering newspapers, an older friend who was a male mentor to him and his brothers, moving to his great-grandparents' home, football in Ohio, his debate partner, attending church while growing up, and his views on church. Lowery recalls reading about civil rights as a teenager and his regret at not attending the March on Washington in 1963. After graduating from high school in 1964, he decided to attend LeMoyne-Owen College in Memphis, Tennessee, where he became involved in the Civil Rights Movement.

African American families.

Poindexter Village (Columbus, Ohio).

Childhood and youth--Ohio--Columbus.

African Americans--Education--Ohio--Columbus.

African Americans--Mentoring.

African American churches--Ohio--Columbus.

Civil rights movements.

LeMoyne-Owen College.

Video Oral History Interview with Myron Lowery, Section

In 1968, Myron Lowery graduated from LeMoyne-Owen College with a bachelor's degree in sociology. He then joined the National Teachers' Corps, and moved to New York City, where he began his master's degree at New York University, and taught in Spanish Harlem. He trained as a journalist for eleven weeks at Columbia University, before joining WMC-TV in Memphis, Tennessee in 1971, as its first full-time African American reporter. Lowery describes his experience at WMC-TV, and the success of his public affairs program, 'Minority Report'. In 1980, he filed an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) lawsuit against WMC-TV, which he won, paving the way for anti-discriminatory action in the minority broadcast community. After leaving the broadcast industry in 1983, Lowery served as U.S. Congressman Harold Ford, Sr.'s press secretary. He reflects upon Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination, and the co-founding the Memphis Association of Black Journalists and the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ).

National Teacher Corps (U.S.).

New York University.

Columbia University.

WMC (Television station : Memphis, Tenn.).

Discrimination in employment.

Ford, Harold, 1945-

National Association of Black Journalists.

From 1983 to 1986, Myron Lowery served as the press secretary to U.S. Congressman Harold Ford, Sr. In 1991, Lowery was elected to the Memphis City Council, on his third time campaigning for the position. He also worked at FedEx Corporation for seventeen years, starting in 1990, serving as a senior communications specialist and as a manager of corporate relations. In 2001, Lowery sued FedEx for discrimination on the grounds of being wrongfully denied promotions during the 2000 reorganization of the company. However, he settled the

lawsuit out of court, and retired from FedEx in 2007. He describes his relationship with Willie Herenton, who served as the Mayor of Memphis from 1991 to 2009, and his ninety-day term as interim mayor upon Herenton's resignation in 2009. Lowery also discusses serving as a speaker at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Illinois, in 1996, when incumbent President Bill Clinton was the presidential nominee.

Ford, Harold, 1945-

FedEx Corporation.

Discrimination in the workplace.

Herenton, W. W. (Willie W.), 1943-

Democratic National Convention--Illinois--Chicago.

Clinton, Bill, 1946-

Video Oral History Interview with Myron Lowery, Section
A2010_088_001_005, TRT: 0:20:04 2010/07/27

Myron Lowery has served on the Memphis City Council since 1991, and reflects upon his legacy. He discusses the progress made by the City of Memphis and the challenges that it faces, his meeting with the Dalai Lama on his visit to Memphis, his service as a superdelegate to the Democratic National Convention (DBNC), and President Barack Obama's administration. Lowery also talks about his family, his hopes and concerns for the community and how he would like to be remembered.

City council members--Tennessee--Memphis.

Dalai lamas.

Democratic National Convention.

Obama, Barack.

African American families.

Video Oral History Interview with Myron Lowery, Section
A2010_088_001_006, TRT: 0:13:28 2010/07/27

Myron Lowery describes his photographs.

Photographs.