

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Farrakhan, Louis
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan,
Dates:	December 14, 2010 and November 29, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	15 uncompressed MOV digital video files (8:02:58).
Abstract:	Minister The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan (1933 -) , leader of the Nation of Islam, was known for his work as an advocate of civil rights and social activism. Farrakhan was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 14, 2010 and November 29, 2010, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_111
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Minister Louis Farrakhan was born on May 11, 1933 in the Bronx, New York to Sarah May and Percival Clarke. He was born Louis Eugene Walcott, but would later adopt the surname of Farrakhan after his conversion to Islam. Louis and his brother, Alvan Walcott, were raised by their mother and step-father in Boston, Massachusetts. As a youth, Farrakhan was a talented violinist and athlete. He graduated from Boston English High School and attended Winston-Salem Teacher's College, during which time he recorded calypso albums under the name "The Charmer." In 1953, Farrakhan married his wife, Khadijah Farrakhan (born Betsy Ross), and he dropped out of college during his senior year to assist her during her pregnancy.

After attending the annual Saviors' Day address delivered by Elijah Muhammad, Leader of the Nation of Islam (NOI), Farrakhan decided to join the NOI in 1955. Farrakhan became minister of Muhammad's Temple No. 11 in Boston, Massachusetts in 1956. Nine years later, he was appointed by Elijah Muhammad to serve as Minister of Muhammad's Temple No. 7 in New York City. Farrakhan worked with the Harlem community to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood, but the decisions made by Imam W. Deen Mohammed to make the NOI resemble Sunni Islam prompted Farrakhan to gather his own supporters and rebuild the NOI based on the leading principles of Wallace Fard Muhammad and Elijah Muhammad. Farrakhan first assumed the role of Leader of the NOI in 1978.

Although at times a controversial figure, Farrakhan's message of a unified community and the importance of reversing negative stereotypes has been the guiding principle of many of his actions. To combat the negative image of African American men often presented by the media, Farrakhan organized the Million Man March in Washington, D.C. on October 16, 1995 and the Millions More Movement ten years later. Farrakhan was voted the Person of the Year by Black Entertainment Television in 2005, and the following year, he was voted the fifth most important African American leader in the AP-AOL "Black Voices" poll.

Louis Farrakhan was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on November 29, 2010.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on December 14, 2010 and November 29, 2010, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 15 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Minister The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan (1933 -) , leader of the Nation of Islam, was known for his work as an advocate of civil rights and social activism.

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:

Farrakhan, Louis

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Farrakhan, Louis--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Nation of Islam (Chicago, Ill.)

Occupations:

Minister

HistoryMakers® Category:

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 The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan, December 14, 2010 and November 29, 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 The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan, Section A2010_111_001_001, TRT: 0:31:11 ?

The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan was born on May 11, 1933 in New York City to Sarah Mae Manning Clarke and Percival Clarke. His maternal grandparents originated on St. Kitts island in the British West Indies, and relocated to Bermuda when his mother was eleven years old. His mother left the island after her first husband's death in 1919, and immigrated to New York City, where she worked as a seamstress and domestic. She also met and married Minister Farrakhan's father, who was a Jamaican immigrant and a devotee of Marcus Garvey. His parents separated in 1934, after which Minister Farrakhan moved with his mother and older half-brother, Alvan Walcott, to the Roxbury community of Boston, Massachusetts. There, he was influenced by black professionals like undertaker James B. Johnson, and sang in the choir at St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church. When he was five years old, his mother gave him a violin, and encouraged him to develop his musical ability. Minister Farrakhan also remembers his first trip to Bermuda.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan, Section A2010_111_001_002, TRT: 0:32:59 ?

The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan sang in the choir at St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church in Boston, Massachusetts, where his family belonged to the congregation. His mother fostered his musical talent from an early age, and hosted dinner guests like calypso singers Cecil Anderson and Rupert Westmore Grant, who taught Minister Farrakhan to sing ballads. He began his education at the segregated Asa Gray School; and, during the fourth grade, transferred to the all-boys Sherwin School, where he excelled academically. He also played violin with the Boston College orchestra. He began the seventh grade at the prestigious Boston Latin School, where he faced discrimination from his white classmates and teachers. After one year, he returned to the all-black Sherwin School, where he was disciplined for standing up to a white teacher. He went on to attend English High School; and, during that time, played the violin in the Boston Civic Symphony, and sang at nightclubs like Boston's Hi-Hat.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan, Section A2010_111_001_003, TRT: 0:28:10 ?

The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan aspired to become a doctor from an early age, but was discouraged by a white teacher at the Sherwin School in Boston, Massachusetts. He went on to attend the integrated English High School, where he took part in military drills and track competitions. In 1949, Minister Farrakhan played the violin on 'The Original Amateur Hour' with Ted Mack. He faced discrimination during the show's filming, when his script was rewritten to fit white expectations. Minister Farrakhan graduated from high school at sixteen years old; and, after a year of preparatory school, received a track scholarship to the historically black Winston Salem Teachers College in North Carolina. There, he joined the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity's Lampados Pledge Club, but was denied entry to the fraternity after speaking against several professors' inappropriate behavior. Minister Farrakhan talks about white supremacy in the American education system, and the bias against African Americans of West Indian descent.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan, Section A2010_111_001_004, TRT: 0:34:44 ?

The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan began playing the violin competitively at the age of fourteen years old. Two years later, he adopted the stage name The Charmer, and began dancing and singing calypso in the nightclubs of Boston, Massachusetts. Later, he formed his own band, The Charmer and His Calypso Rhythm Boys. On his way to enroll at the Winston Salem Teachers College in

North Carolina, he was refused entry into a movie theater because of his race, and was inspired to write the song 'Why America Is No Democracy.' In North Carolina, he was initially barred from competing in Horace Heidt's all-white talent show; and, after the Winston Salem NAACP secured his admission, he tied for first place. Minister Farrakhan left college after three years when his wife, Betsy Ross Walcott, became pregnant. Later, in 1954, he and his band recorded an album that featured hit calypso songs like 'Ugly Woman.' Minister Farrakhan also talks about his musical influences, including actor Harry Belafonte.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan, Section A2010_111_001_005, TRT: 0:32:39 ?

The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan headlined the 'Calypso Follies' show in 1955 at the Blue Angel nightclub in Chicago, Illinois. While there, he visited the Nation of Islam's (NOI) Temple No. 2, where he heard Elijah Muhammad give a sermon called A Savior is Born for the Black Man and Woman of America. Minister Farrakhan then returned to New York City, where he joined Temple No. 7. There, he was influenced by Malcolm X's sermons; and, from 1955, served as the temple's lieutenant, and later as its assistant minister. He continued to perform in nightclubs until receiving a spiritual vision; and, at that time, decided to give up his musical career to focus on his faith. Minister Farrakhan became the leader of Temple No. 11 in Boston, Massachusetts. In 1959, he recorded the song 'A White Man's Heaven is a Black Man's Hell,' and performed it around the country as an anthem of the NOI. Under the guidance of Elijah Muhammad, Minister Farrakhan later retired from music entirely.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan, Section A2010_111_001_006, TRT: 0:31:36 ?

The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan joined the Nation of Islam (NOI) at Temple No. 7 in New York City, where he was mentored by Malcolm X. He learned to maintain a professional appearance and healthy lifestyle, and studied the Bible and Qur'an. In 1959, Minister Farrakhan was featured in Mike Wallace and Louis Lomax's documentary, 'The Hate That Hate Produced,' which drew national attention to the NOI. Later that year, Minister Farrakhan was named the head of Temple No. 11 in Boston, Massachusetts. During his tenure there, his mother joined the NOI and took the name Sumayyah Farrakhan, and the Boston area experienced growth in Muslim owned businesses. In 1961, Minister Farrakhan wrote the play 'The Trial,' which depicted a trial and judgment of the white community. He also talks about the portrayal of the NOI in 'The Hate That Hate Produced,' which resulted in scholarly studies like C. Eric Lincoln's 'The Black Muslims in America,' and attracted federal scrutiny from COINTELPRO agents.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan, Section A2010_111_002_007, TRT: 0:31:52 ?

The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan was one of the leaders of the Nation of Islam (NOI); and, at this point in the interview, describes the organization's history. In 1930, NOI founder Wallace Fard Muhammad came to Detroit, Michigan, where he established Temple No. 1 and recruited 25,000 members. Wallace Fard Muhammad later left Detroit, and selected Elijah Muhammad as his spiritual representative. In 1942, Elijah Muhammad was arrested for teaching African American children outside of the public school system, and remained imprisoned until 1947. Malcolm X converted to Islam in 1949; and, from that time, the NOI experienced rapid growth in membership, including the addition of Minister Farrakhan in 1954. After President John Fitzgerald Kennedy's

assassination in 1963, Malcolm X criticized the president publically, and was silenced by Elijah Muhammad for ninety days. Minister Farrakhan also talks about the forerunners of the NOI, including the Marcus Garvey movement and the Moorish Science Temple of America.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan, Section A2010_111_002_008, TRT: 0:32:16 ?

The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan travelled to New York City in 1963 to visit Malcolm X, who had been silenced for ninety days by Nation of Islam (NOI) leader Elijah Muhammad. While there, he learned that Elijah Muhammad had fathered children with his secretaries. Minister Farrakhan returned to Boston, Massachusetts, where he gained insight into Elijah Muhammad's actions through the chapter Surah Al Ahzab of the Qu'ran, which spoke of the prophet's multiple wives. On Saviours' Day in 1964, Elijah Muhammad chose Minister Farrakhan to give the opening remarks; and, shortly after, Malcolm X left the NOI. Later in 1964, heavy weight boxing champion Cassius Clay joined the NOI and took the name Muhammad Ali. Following Malcolm X's assassination and the bombing of Temple No. 7 in 1965, Minister Farrakhan was recruited to oversee the mosques in New York City. Minister Farrakhan also remembers Malcolm X's trip to Saudi Arabia in 1964, and the founding of the Muhammad Speaks newspaper in the 1960s.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan, Section A2010_111_002_009, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan's song, 'The White Man's Heaven is a Black Man's Hell' and Malcolm X's influence were both instrumental in the recruitment of Muhammad Ali to the Nation of Islam (NOI) in 1964. The following year, Minister Farrakhan was selected to lead Mosque No. 7 in New York City. There, he befriended Congressman Charles B. Rangel, New York State Senator Basil Paterson and his son, David A. Paterson, who later served as New York's lieutenant governor. In 1972, Minister Farrakhan used his political influence to bar white policemen from patrolling the Harlem neighborhood. During his tenure as the NOI's leader in New York City, he established eighteen mosque locations and four universities. In 1974, he spoke at Black Family Day in Randall's Island Park, which was attended by seventy thousand people. Elijah Muhammad passed away in 1975, and Minister Farrakhan became his successor. Minister Farrakhan also talks about Muhammad Ali's protests against the Vietnam War.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan, Section A2010_111_002_010, TRT: 0:36:35 ?

The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan served as the national representative of the Nation of Islam's (NOI) economic initiatives, including the Guaranty Bank and Trust Company, which was acquired by the NOI in 1972. Three years later, NOI leader Elijah Muhammad passed away; and his son, Wallace D. Muhammad, became his official successor. Despite Minister Farrakhan's pledge of allegiance, he was treated with mistrust by Wallace D. Muhammad, and was sent to Chicago, Illinois. In 1976, actor Brock Peters asked Minister Farrakhan to speak at comedian Godfrey Cambridge's funeral in California, where he met actor Roscoe Lee Browne, poet Maya Angelou and writer James Baldwin, who was writing 'One Day When I Was Lost,' a screenplay about the life of Malcolm X. Minister Farrakhan was also warned by a seer that his life was in danger, and left the Nation of Islam to work as an entertainer. In 1977, he visited Mecca, where he was inspired to return to the Nation of Islam to revive the teachings of Elijah Muhammad.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan, Section
A2010_111_002_011, TRT: 0:34:48 ?

The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan returned to the Nation of Islam in 1977 in Chicago, Illinois. With help from community activists Jorja Palmer and Lutrelle “Lu” F. Palmer, II, Minister Farrakhan rallied the support of magazine publishing executive John H. Johnson; poet Haki Madhubuti, who recruited local black nationalists like Professor Conrad Walter Worrill; and journalist Vernon Jarrett, who wrote in the Chicago Tribune about the threats to Minister Farrakhan’s life. Additionally, Chicago Defender owner John H. Senstacke provided Minister Farrakhan with a weekly column. Through Muhammad Ali’s former wife, Sonji Roi, and her husband, attorney Reynaldo Glover, Minister Farrakhan met with Illinois Governor Richard B. Ogilvie, who advised him to remain in public for his own safety. During this time, Chicago police officers Howard Saffold and Renault Robinson organized a security detail for his protection, and invited him to speak at a national meeting of the Afro American Patrolmen’s League.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan, Section
A2010_111_002_012, TRT: 0:32:56 ?

The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan revived the Nation of Islam after it was disbanded by Elijah Muhammad’s son, Warith Deen Mohammed, during the mid-1970s. Minister Farrakhan initially reconvened the Fruit of Islam at the churches of Reverend Albert Richard Sampson and Reverend Dr. Kwame John R. Porter in Chicago, Illinois; and, in 1981, held Chicago’s first Saviours’ Day celebration, which was attended by over 3,000 people. He also defended Reverend Jesse L. Jackson during his presidential campaign in 1984, which resulted in censure from the Jewish community. In 1985, the Saviours’ Day celebration in New York City was attended by over 50,000 people. That year, Minister Farrakhan launched an initiative called People Organized and Working for Economic Rebirth (POWER), through which he designed the Clean ‘n Fresh product line with the Johnson Products Company. Minister Farrakhan also remembers the launch of The Final Call newsletter in 1979, and his reconciliation with Warith Deen Mohammed in 2008.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan, Section
A2010_111_002_013, TRT: 0:43:46 ?

The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan traveled in 1985 to Tepotzlan, Mexico. While there, he hiked to a mountaintop temple to pray, and received a vision in which he was taken up into a flying wheel known as the Mother Plane. Inside the Mother Plane, he was led into a room where he was informed by the voice of Nation of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad that President Ronald Wilson Reagan planned to start a war, and was instructed to hold a press conference in warning. Following his vision, Minister Farrakhan embarked on a world tour, during which he warned Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi of an impending attack. The following year, Libya was bombed by the United States. In addition, Minister Louis Farrakhan remembers his efforts to reconcile with Jewish leaders and the Anti Defamation League of B’nai B’rith; his former assistant, Khalid Abdul Muhammad; and the attempt on his life by Malcolm X’s daughter, Qubilah Shabazz, in 1995.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan, Section
A2010_111_002_014, TRT: 0:42:10 ?

The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan launched the year-long Stop the Killing tour in 1994, during which he travelled throughout the United States and advocated to improve conditions for African American men. In 1995, Minister

Farrakhan organized the Million Man March, in which a crowd of two million African American men gathered at the National Mall in Washington, D.C. for a peaceful demonstration. He was joined by Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, poet Haki Madhubuti, activist Dorothy Height, civil rights leader Rosa Parks and poet Maya Angelou. In 1998, Minister Farrakhan embarked on the World Friendship Tour, where he visited majority-Muslim countries in an effort to foster worldwide Muslim unity. In 2000, he hosted the interfaith Million Family March in Washington, D.C. Minister Farrakhan reflects upon his life and legacy, as well as his cancer diagnoses. He talks about the future of the United States, and describes his hopes for the Nation of Islam.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan, Section A2010_111_002_015, TRT: 0:07:06 ?

The Honorable Minister Louis Farrakhan reflects upon his life, and his decision to participate in The HistoryMakers' project.