

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Richardson, W. Franklyn, 1949-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson,
Dates:	May 18, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012
Physical Description:	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:20:58).
Abstract:	Religious leader Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson (1949 -) was the senior pastor of the Grace Baptist Church and the chairman of the National Action Network. Richardson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 18, 2012, in Mt. Vernon, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_122
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Reverend, W. Franklyn Richardson was born on June 14, 1949 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania's Westside. His father William Franklyn Richardson Sr. worked in the meat packing district, and his mother Amanda Richardson owned a beauty parlor. Richardson is the eldest of four and grew up anchored in the church. He attended West Philadelphia High School and obtained his B.A. degree from Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia. In 1975, he earned his master of sacred theology from Yale University, and his doctorate as a Wyatt Tee Walker Fellow from the United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio.

At the age of eighteen Richardson delivered his first sermon at Community Baptist Church in Philadelphia, where he was issued a license to preach. By the age of nineteen, Richardson was subsequently, full-time pastor of Rising Mount Zion Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia and St. James Baptist Church in Varina, Virginia. In 1975, Richardson delivered his trial sermon at Grace Baptist Church in Mount Veron, New York, a year later he was selected to serve at Grace as senior pastor. In 1976, Grace Baptist Church hosted the New Year's Eve Watch Night service aired on national radio opposite the New Year's Eve service hosted by the pope. The following year, Grace's Christmas service aired on CBS (coordinated by actor Ossie Davis). In 1982, Richardson became the host of WVOX, 1460 radio broadcasted nationally every Sunday morning. He is the founder of, "Windows of Grace", Grace in Port St. Lucie Florida, and the Freedom School. Richardson has been selected by Al Sharpton to serve as chairman of the National Action Network. As chairman, his responsibilities included leading the organization on raising the consciousness of African-Americans.

Richardson has been inducted into the Martin Luther King, Jr., Board of Preachers at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. He has also been elected as General Secretary for the National Baptist Convention United States of America, Inc. Richardson has served on the World Council of Churches Central Committee, the Ujamaa community development corporation and the Harvard University Divinity School Summer Leadership Institute. He has been presented with the Red Cross Award and in 2010, delivered a sermon at Saint Matthew Anglican Church in Soweto, South Africa. Richardson currently resides in Scarsdale, New York. He is married to Inez Nunnally Richardson; they are the parents of two adult children and the grandparents of four.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 18, 2012, in Mt. Vernon, New York, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Religious leader Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson (1949 -) was the senior pastor of the Grace Baptist Church and the chairman of the National Action Network.

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:

Richardson, W. Franklyn, 1949-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Richardson, W. Franklyn, 1949---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Religious Leader

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 Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, May 18, 2012. 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 Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, Section A2012_122_001_001, TRT: 1:30:06 2012/05/18

Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson was born on June 14, 1949 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Amanda Ellison Richardson and William F. Richardson, Sr. His maternal grandparents, Mattie Clinkseale Ellison and Wade Ellison, came from Newport News, Virginia, where Richardson's grandfather served as a minister in the Colored Methodist Episcopal (C.M.E.) church. After moving to Philadelphia, Richardson's grandfather left the C.M.E. church to become an independent pastor. Richardson's mother was born in Newport News, and joined the Mount Pisgah A.M.E. Church after moving to Philadelphia. There, she also ran a beauty shop called Amanda's Beauty Bar. Richardson's paternal great-grandparents, Della Richardson and Willie Richardson, born into slavery in South Carolina. They raised Richard's paternal grandmother, Emma Richardson Williams, to whom Richardson's father was born out of wedlock in 1923. He fled to Philadelphia after receiving threats for speaking back to a white man at the age of fourteen years old.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, Section A2012_122_001_002, TRT: 2:31:06 2012/05/18

Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson's mother, Amanda Ellison Richardson, converted from the African Methodist Episcopal faith to the Baptist church after marrying Richardson's father, William F. Richardson, Sr. Together, they raised three children in West Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. At this point in the interview, Richardson

talks about his siblings, both of whom worked in the entertainment industry. His brother, Ron Richardson, won a Tony Award for his role in the Broadway production of 'Big River'; and his sister, Vickilyn Richardson Reynolds, acted in the television series 'Sugar and Spice.' Richardson's family belonged to the Community Baptist Church of West Philadelphia, where he took part in the Young People's Fellowship and the choir. He attended Anna Howard Shaw Junior High School, and graduated from West Philadelphia High School in 1966. After that time, Richardson found work at the Hankins Funeral Home, Inc., and briefly attended the Community College of Philadelphia.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, Section A2012_122_001_003, TRT: 3:29:38 2012/05/18

Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson grew up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania during the 1960s. His father, William F. Richardson, Sr., was a district leader of the Democratic Party, and assisted in the election of black politicians like Congressmen Robert N.C. Nix, Sr. Richardson attended Reverend James Hamlin's Community Baptist Church of West Philadelphia, and became involved with the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. During his senior year at West Philadelphia High School, he underwent an emergency appendectomy, and suffered complications that resulted in a temporary paralysis. During his recovery, Richardson was called to become a minister. He enrolled at Virginia Union University in Richmond, where he was required to complete remedial reading courses. During his freshman year, he joined the student government and began preaching at local churches. In 1969, Richardson was asked to head Richmond's Rising Mount Zion Baptist Church, thus beginning his pastoral career at nineteen years old.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, Section A2012_122_001_004, TRT: 4:29:25 2012/05/18

Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson joined the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. in the late 1960s, during his tenure as pastor of the Rising Mount Zion Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia. At this point, he talks

about the formation of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, and the convention leadership, including Joseph H. Jackson and Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. While serving as a pastor, Richardson continued his studies at Virginia Union University, where he joined the Alpha Phi Omega Fraternity and served on the student government. He was mentored by the school's president, Allix B. James, as well as Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker and Reverend Gardner Taylor. In 1974, Richardson was called to preach at the Grace Baptist Church, which was a large and historic church in Mount Vernon, New York. While there, he enrolled at the Yale Divinity School in New Haven, Connecticut, and was elected to serve as general secretary of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, Section A2012_122_001_005, TRT: 5:30:28 2012/05/18

Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson earned a master's degree in divinity from the Yale Divinity School in New Haven, Connecticut, and completed his doctorate of ministry at the United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. There, Richardson served as a student mentor under Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker. During his graduate studies, Richardson continued to serve as the pastor of the Grace Baptist Church in Mount Vernon, New York, and as general secretary of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. under President T.J. Jemison. Through this position, Richardson was introduced to the World Council of Churches, where he became the representative of the Baptist denomination on the organization's Central Committee. In 1989, Richardson was inducted into the Board of Ministers and Laity at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. The Grace Baptist Church continued to grow, and Richardson founded the Grace Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools and opened a second church in Port St. Lucie, Florida.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, Section A2012_122_001_006, TRT: 6:28:36 2012/05/18

Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson served as the vice chairman of the National Action Network (NAN) under the nonprofit civil rights organization's founding

chairmen, Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker and Reverend Al Sharpton. After Reverend Walker's retirement, Richardson accepted the position of chairman. In this role, he advocated for an end to police brutality and other forms of social injustice. After the shooting of black teenager Trayvon Martin in 2012, NAN staged a series of demonstrations against his killer, civilian George Zimmerman. That same year, NAN protested against the decision to restore a gun to one of the police officers who killed Amadou Diallo in 1999. During this time, Richardson also served as the chairman of the Conference of National Black Churches, which was comprised of nine historically black religious denominations. He talks about the problems faced by independent storefront churches, and describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, Section A2012_122_001_007, TRT: 7:21:39 2012/05/18

Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson served on advisory board of PepsiCo, where he advocated for greater minority participation in corporate sectors like marketing and human resources. He also served on the Virginia Union University Board of Trustees and the diversity council for Comcast/NBCUniversal, where he was instrumental in the creation of two African American television networks, *Aspire* and *Revolt*. As chairman of the Conference of National Black Churches, Richardson also created the *Our Faith Empowers* program, which sought to accumulate financial wealth in the African American community. While serving on these boards, Richardson continued to pastor the Grace Baptist Church in Mount Vernon, New York, where he officiated the funeral of Ossie Davis. He also broadcast his sermons on the Internet and on the television show 'Windows of Grace.' Richardson reflects upon his life and legacy, and concludes the interview by describing how he would like to be remembered.