

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Jack White

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	White, Jack E., Jr.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Jack White,
Dates:	February 28, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	12 uncompressed MOV digital video files (5:43:10).
Abstract:	Magazine editor Jack White (1946 -) was the first African American staff writer and bureau chief at Time magazine. White was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 28, 2013, in Richmond, Virginia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_067
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Magazine editor Jack E. White, Jr. was born in 1946 in Washington, North Carolina. His father, Jack White, Sr., was a physician. White was awarded a Nieman fellowship at Harvard University in 1976 and studied African Affairs and American ethnic politics for one year. Prior to joining the staff at *Time* magazine, White was a staff writer at the *Washington Post* from 1966 to 1968, and then at the *Race Relations Reporter* in Nashville, Tennessee from 1969 to 1972. He also contributed articles to the *Columbia Journalism Review*, the *Progressive*, *Ebony* magazine, and *Black Enterprise* magazine.

White joined the staff at *Time* magazine in 1972 as a full-time staff writer where he contributed to the “Modern Living,” “Economy & Business” and “Energy” sections. In his twenty-nine year career with *Time* magazine, White served as correspondent in Atlanta, Georgia and Boston, Massachusetts; as a senior correspondent and editor of the “Nation” section in New York City; and, as a bureau chief in Nairobi, Kenya. In 1985, White became the Midwest bureau chief for *Time* magazine based in Chicago, Illinois. He was named deputy chief of correspondents *Time* magazine in 1987 where he managed fifty-one correspondents in ten domestic bureaus across the United States. White was the first African American staff-writer, bureau chief, and editor at *Time* magazine. In 1992, White left his TIME magazine and became a senior producer for domestic news on “ABC World News Tonight with Peter Jennings.”

In May of 1995, White was assigned by Time, Inc.’s Editor-in- chief Normal Pearlstine to recruit minority journalists for all magazines owned by the company, which include *TIME*, *People*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Life*, *Fortune*, *Money*, *Sports Illustrated for Kids*, *In Style* and *Martha Stewart’s Living*. He retired from *Time* magazine in 2001 and became a frequent contributor to *The Root*. White has also served as a writer-in-residence at the Howard University School of Journalism and as an adjust professor of journalism at Virginia Commonwealth University. He was the co-author, with Bari-Ellen Roberts, of *Roberts vs. Texaco: A True Story of Race and Corporate America* (1998). In 2005, White left his position as the Scripps Howard Endowed Chair at the Hampton University School of Communications.

White has won many journalism awards, including the Before Columbus Foundation's American Book Award, the Lifetime Achievement Award from the New York Association of Black Journalists, and the Unity Award from Lincoln University (Missouri). In 1995, Time, Inc.'s in-house newsletter recognized White as the best writer at any of the country's magazines. In 1999, the National Association of Black Journalists selected him as one of the 100 Most Influential Black Journalists of the Twentieth Century.

Jack E. White, Jr. was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 28, 2013

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Jack White was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 28, 2013, in Richmond, Virginia, and was recorded on 12 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Magazine editor Jack White (1946 -) was the first African American staff writer and bureau chief at Time magazine.

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:

White, Jack E., Jr.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

White, Jack E., Jr.--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Time, Inc.

Occupations:

Magazine Editor

HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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 Jack White, February 28, 2013. 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 Jack White, Section A2013_067_001_001, TRT: 1:29:57 ?

Jack White was born on June 30, 1946 in Washington, North Carolina to Sara Williams White and Jack E. White. His maternal grandfather was a descendant of John Howland, who came to America aboard the Mayflower. White's grandfather spent his early life in South Creek, North Carolina, and later worked as a chauffeur in Washington, North Carolina. He and his wife died of tuberculosis after many years in a sanitarium. White's mother went on study at the Freedmen's Hospital School of Nursing in Washington, D.C. White's paternal grandfather was born into slavery in 1855. Following emancipation, he moved to Daytona Beach, Florida, where he attended the Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute. He went on to become a school teacher and coffin maker. White's father was the youngest of sixteen children, and grew up in Stuart, Florida. He attended the Seneca Institute in South Carolina, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College and the Howard University College of Medicine, where he was mentored by Dr. Charles R. Drew.

Video Oral History Interview with Jack White, Section A2013_067_001_002, TRT: 2:30:29 ?

Jack White's father, Jack E. White, earned a medical degree from Howard University in the late 1940s, around the time of White's birth. During his infancy, White lived with his paternal grandparents in Florida. He reunited with his parents in Boston, Massachusetts, where his father interned at the Naval Hospital Boston. From 1949 to 1951, White and his family lived in New York City, where his father practiced surgery at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. They eventually returned to Washington, D.C., where White's father joined the faculty of the Howard University College of Medicine. He taught Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr. and William W. Funderburk; worked with Dr. Charles R. Drew; and founded the tumor clinic at Freedmen's Hospital. White began his education at Lucretia Mott Elementary School in Washington, D.C. When he was eight years old, his family helped integrate the Brookland neighborhood of Northeast Washington, where his neighbors included Ralph Bunche, Sterling A. Brown and Amina Dickerson.

Video Oral History Interview with Jack White, Section A2013_067_001_003, TRT: 3:32:08 ?

Jack White began his education at Lucretia Mott Elementary School in Washington, D.C. During the third grade, he moved with his family to the Brookland section of Northeast Washington. There, he enrolled at Taft Junior High School. At his parents' insistence, he studied the violin under Isador Bransky, a Russian musician who played with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. However, White's father ended the lessons after hearing Bransky use a racial slur. White went on to attend McKinley Technical High School in Washington, D.C., where he was introduced to the works of black authors like Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin. White was also inspired by the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, including SNCC activists Charles E. Cobb, Jr. and Karen Spellman, and Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. His family often took road trips to his paternal grandparents' home in Florida. Along the way, they were often denied access to lodging and restroom facilities because of their race.

Video Oral History Interview with Jack White, Section A2013_067_001_004, TRT: 4:30:29 ?

Jack White attended McKinley Technical High School in Washington, D.C. Although he rarely studied, he was a strong student in science and mathematics. Upon graduating in 1963, he attended the March on Washington, and then began his studies at Swarthmore College in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. There, he

befriended the founding members of the Students for a Democratic Society; as well as Michael Meeropol, the son of Soviet spies Julius Rosenberg and Ethel Rosenberg. White also joined the civil rights advocate Stanley Branche in agitating for school desegregation in Chester, Pennsylvania. During his sophomore year, White left Swarthmore College and was hired as a copy assistant at The Washington Post. There, he was mentored by journalist Robert C. Maynard, and went on to cover meetings of the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. In 1967, White received a promotion for his report on SNCC Chairman H. Rap Brown's speech in Cambridge, Maryland.

Video Oral History Interview with Jack White, Section A2013_067_001_005, TRT: 5:28:50 ?

Jack White worked as a police reporter for The Washington Post during the late 1960s. In 1968, he covered the uprisings that occurred in response to the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Over six days, the rioters destroyed many of the white-owned businesses in the city's predominantly black areas, including Georgia Avenue. Shortly after the riots ended, White left The Washington Post and joined the TransCentury Limited consulting firm, where he worked with anti-poverty advocates. During this period, he also helped journalist Les Kimber develop The California Advocate, a black newspaper based in Fresno, California. In 1969, White became a Frederick Douglass Global Fellow at the Richmond Afro-American in Richmond, Virginia, where he reported on the moon landing. He then joined the writing staff of the Race Relations Information Center in Nashville, Tennessee. While attending a National Urban League conference in 1972, White was recruited by William Trent to join the staff of Time magazine.

Video Oral History Interview with Jack White, Section A2013_067_001_006, TRT: 6:29:36 ?

Jack White helped to found the National Association of Black Media Workers in 1970, along with journalists like Earl Caldwell and Claude Lewis. Two years later, White was hired at Time magazine. There, he was initially assigned as a junior writer in the modern living section, which he found unchallenging. Aspiring to work as a reporter, White proposed a story on the black middle class, and was promoted in 1974 to a correspondent position at the Time Life News Service in Atlanta, Georgia. After two years there, he began a fellowship at Harvard University's Nieman Foundation for Journalism in Cambridge, Massachusetts. White went on to work at the Time magazine bureaus in Boston, Massachusetts and New York City, where he reported on international affairs. In 1979, White transferred to the Time magazine bureau in Nairobi, Kenya, where he served as the Africa bureau chief. At this point in the interview, White also talks about the founding of the National Association of Black Journalists.

Video Oral History Interview with Jack White, Section A2013_067_001_007, TRT: 7:31:20 ?

Jack White first traveled on assignment to Africa with Time magazine in 1978. However, due to a problem with his visa, he was barred from entering Nigeria. The following year, he was stationed in Nairobi, Kenya as Time's Africa bureau chief. In this role, he covered the founding of the Republic of Zimbabwe in 1980, and the coup d'état led by the military leader and politician Samuel Doe in Liberia. In 1981, White and The Washington Post journalist Leon DeCosta Dash traveled to Nigeria, where they reported on a violent uprising in the northern city of Kano. In the Gambia, they covered the aftermath of Kukoi Sanyang's rebellion against the government of President Dawda Jawara. In 1982, White reported on the undermining of Uganda's elections by the Uganda National Liberation Army. During his time in Africa, White remembers meeting African journalists like Hilary Ng'weno, who was from Kenya. He also talks about his

editors' resistance to publishing African news stories in Time magazine.

Video Oral History Interview with Jack White, Section A2013_067_001_008, TRT: 8:30:58 ?

Jack White returned to the Time magazine bureau in New York City as a correspondent in 1982. In this role, he reported on Reverend Jesse L. Jackson's U.S. presidential campaign in 1983. He also covered Reverend Jackson's intercession in Syria, where Jackson successfully advocated for the release of Lieutenant Bobby Goodman, who was held captive by Hafez al-Assad's regime. During this time, White and other African American journalists, including George Curry and Milton Coleman, were aware of the derogatory comments made in private by Reverend Jackson about New York City's Jewish community. After the comments were published in The Washington Post, Reverend Jackson was forced to apologize at the 1984 Democratic National Convention. White also talks about the media coverage of Jackson's extramarital affair with Karin Stanford, who was the mother of his daughter, Ashley Jackson. White was unable to publish the story in Time magazine, and the affair was revealed by the National Enquirer in 2001.

Video Oral History Interview with Jack White, Section A2013_067_001_009, TRT: 9:34:52 ?

Jack White covered Reverend Jesse L. Jackson's U.S. presidential campaign for Time magazine. After the campaign ended in 1984, White was promoted to head the magazine's bureau in Chicago, Illinois, where he wrote about Mayor Harold Washington's administration. After two years in Chicago, White became the deputy chief of correspondents at Time. In this role, he oversaw 51 journalists across the magazine's 17 domestic bureaus. During the 1980s, White wrote cover stories on the prevalence of violence among young, black men, including 'Today's Native Sons' and 'The Ghetto: From Bad to Worse.' He also interviewed the sociologist William Julius Wilson about class stratification in the black community. White talks about the bombing of the MOVE headquarters in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He also remembers writing about school shootings in 'Armed America,' and the United States' increasing racial diversity in 'America's Changing Colors.' In 1992, White was hired as a television producer for ABC News.

Video Oral History Interview with Jack White, Section A2013_067_001_010, TRT: 10:30:48 ?

Jack White worked briefly as a producer at ABC News in 1992, and then returned to Time magazine as a senior correspondent. In this role, he covered the trial of O.J. Simpson in 1995. He also wrote about high profile police brutality cases, including the sexual assault of Abner Louima and the fatal shooting of Amadou Diallo by New York City police. Around this time, White created a column called the Dividing Line, and began to experiment with satirical writing. To criticize racial politics, he devised the fictitious Home for Retired Racial Stereotypes, which was populated by characters like Buckwheat, Kingfish, Tonto and Frito Bandito. White retired from Time magazine in 2001, following the merger of Time Warner, Inc. and America Online, Inc. He went on to write for The Root, and became a professor of journalism at Hampton University. At this point in the interview, White talks about the election of President Barack Obama, and his hopes for the United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Jack White, Section A2013_067_001_011, TRT: 11:27:14 ?

Jack White had five children, including one stepson with his wife, Gayle Jessup White. At the time of the interview in 2013, his mother, Sara Williams White, was living in Washington, D.C. White talks about the reelection of President Barack Obama in 2012. He reflects upon President Obama's first term in office and the challenges that he faced as the United States' first African American president, including criticism from Cornel West and Tavis Smiley. White shares

his journalistic philosophy, and concludes this part of the interview by reflecting upon his legacy, career and how he would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Jack White, Section A2013_067_001_012, TRT: 12:06:29 ?

Jack White narrates his photographs.