

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Milton Coleman

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Coleman, Milton, 1946-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Milton Coleman,
<b>Dates:</b>	May 23, 2013
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2013
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:28:11).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Newspaper editor Milton Coleman (1946 - ) was the managing editor of The Washington Post. He also served as president of the American Society of News Editors and the Inter-American Press Association. Coleman was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 23, 2013, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2013_125
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Newspaper editor Milton R. Coleman was born on November 29, 1946 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Coleman grew up in the Hillside Terrace public housing project in Milwaukee. He attended Fourth Street Elementary School and then graduated from Lincoln Junior and Senior High School. Coleman received his B.F.A. degree in music history and literature from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. In 1971, he was named a Southern Education Foundation Fellow. In 1974, Coleman was awarded a fellowship to attend the Michele Clark Summer Program for Minority Journalists at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism.

Coleman began his career in journalism as a reporter for the *Milwaukee Courier*. He then worked as a reporter and editor for several minority-oriented news outlets, including the *African World* newspaper in Greensboro, North Carolina; the All-African News Service; WHUR-FM in Washington, D.C.; and the Community News Service of New York. Coleman also worked at a major metropolitan newspaper, the *Minneapolis Star*, before joining *The Washington Post* in 1976 as a reporter on the metropolitan desk where he covered politics and government in Montgomery County, Maryland and the District of Columbia. In 1980, he was promoted to the city editor. Coleman then moved to the national news staff in 1983 where he covered minorities and immigration, the 1984 Presidential campaign, state and local governments, and the U.S. Congress. In 1986, he was hired as the assistant managing editor for the metropolitan news where he directed the newspapers local coverage. In July of 1996, Coleman was promoted to deputy managing editor of *The Washington Post*.

Coleman is a member of the National Association of Black Journalists, and the Inter-American Press Association. He served as a member of the nominating committee for the Pulitzer Prize in Journalism and as the chairman of the Seldon Ring Award for Investigative Reporting Judging Committee. In April of 2010, Coleman was elected as the president of the American Society of News Editors; and, in October of 2011, he was elected as the president of the Inter-American Press Association. In 2012, Coleman was selected as the inaugural University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Foundation Alumni Fellow.

Milton R. Coleman was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 23, 2013.

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# Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Milton Coleman was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 23, 2013, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Newspaper editor Milton Coleman (1946 - ) was the managing editor of The Washington Post. He also served as president of the American Society of News Editors and the Inter-American Press Association.

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# 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®.

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# 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.

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# Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

## Persons:

Coleman, Milton, 1946-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Coleman, Milton, 1946- --Interviews

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# Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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Washington Post Company

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## Occupations:

Newspaper Editor

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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## 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 Milton Coleman, May 23, 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Milton Coleman, Section A2013\_125\_001\_001, TRT: 1:28:32 ?  
Milton Coleman was born on November 29, 1946 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin to

Justine Malone Coleman and James Coleman. His maternal grandfather, Silas Malone, was believed to have been born in Athens, Georgia. After an encounter with a white woman, he was forced to flee to the North, where he worked in the steel mills of Chicago, Illinois and Gary, Indiana. He settled in Milwaukee, where he met his wife, Mary Raasch Malone. She had German heritage, and was disowned by her family because of their interracial marriage. Coleman's mother spent the majority of her life in Milwaukee, and married Coleman's father shortly after graduating from Lincoln Junior-Senior High School. Coleman's father was born in Roe, Arkansas to William Coleman, who travelled throughout the United States as a railroad worker. His family eventually settled in Milwaukee, where Coleman's father graduated from Lincoln Junior-Senior High School and then became a general laborer.

Video Oral History Interview with Milton Coleman, Section A2013\_125\_001\_002, TRT: 2:28:33 ?

Milton Coleman grew up in the Hillside Terrace public housing development in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. There, his neighbors included Howard Fuller, who became the superintendent of the Milwaukee Public Schools; and Harvey Scales, who wrote 'Disco Lady' for singer Johnnie Taylor. The complex was managed by Calvin Beckett, who was among the first African American public housing officials in Milwaukee. Coleman began his education at the Fourth Street School, where he enjoyed playing basketball. He was also a strong student, and skipped a grade. During this time, he occasionally attended the St. Matthew C.M.E. Church with his family. After enrolling at Lincoln Junior-Senior High School, he began attending the Blessed Martin de Porres Church, which was across the street from Hillside Terrace. As an adult, Coleman developed an interest in the Great Migration, and read books like Isabel Wilkerson's 'The Warmth of Other Suns' to understand more about his parents, who came to Milwaukee from the South.

Video Oral History Interview with Milton Coleman, Section A2013\_125\_001\_003, TRT: 3:30:00 ?

Milton Coleman enjoyed his English and mathematics courses during his elementary school years at the Fourth Street School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Under the influence of his older sister, Sharon Coleman, Coleman became an avid reader, and once created a small newspaper. He was also influenced by his brother, Jerome Coleman, who was highly creative and enjoyed dance, art and clothing design. Coleman excelled academically, and was elected student council president during his final two years at Lincoln Junior-Senior High School. He learned to play the drums, and joined the show band and jazz band. He also took part in Boys State, directed the Follies student variety show, and played on the basketball team. During this time, Coleman was encouraged by band director Ronald DeVillers, basketball coach Richard Wadewitz and teacher Thomas Cheeks. He was also influenced by classmates like Albert Jackson, a star athlete who was barred from playing sports because of his poor grades.

Video Oral History Interview with Milton Coleman, Section A2013\_125\_001\_004, TRT: 4:28:31 ?

Milton Coleman entered the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 1963. He decided to major in music education, and studied music history under Professor Edith Borroff. During this time, Coleman became involved in the black student movement. He joined the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and the Alliance of Black Students, and protested against housing segregation with Father James Groppi and the NAACP Youth Council. After taking courses in anthropology, Coleman changed his area of study to African American ethnomusicology. He also developed an interest in journalism after publishing a music review in the university newspaper. Through his girlfriend, poet Carolyn Rogers, Coleman became acquainted with newspaper editor Hoyt W. Fuller, who recruited him to

write for the Negro Digest. There, Coleman published articles on cultural nationalism and education, and reviewed the works of black activists like Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown. Coleman received his bachelor's degree in 1969.

Video Oral History Interview with Milton Coleman, Section A2013\_125\_001\_005, TRT: 5:30:10 ?

Milton Coleman worked as a summer program director at the Northcott Neighborhood House in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In this role, he spoke at a rally in Garfield Park to discourage rioting after the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968. Coleman then worked for the Milwaukee Courier from 1969 to 1970, when he moved to North Carolina to serve as the news coordinator for the Student Organization for Black Unity (SOBU) under the leadership of Nelson Johnson. In North Carolina, Coleman met and married Faye Edwards Coleman; and their son, Sekou Coleman, was born in 1971. One year later, Coleman moved with his family to Washington, D.C., where he founded the All African News Service. He sourced news from reporters across the country, including Reggie Major, who was affiliated with the Black Panther Party in San Francisco, California; Los Angeles Times writer Francis Ward, who was based in Chicago, Illinois; and Charles E. Cobb, Jr., who was living in Tanzania at the time.

Video Oral History Interview with Milton Coleman, Section A2013\_125\_001\_006, TRT: 6:30:23 ?

Milton Coleman enrolled in the Michele Clark Summer Program for Minority Journalists at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism in 1974. There, he was taught by Robert C. Maynard, who was an editor of The Washington Post. After graduating from the program, Coleman secured a position at the Minneapolis Star. There were few African Americans in Minneapolis, Minnesota at the time, and he and his wife, Faye Coleman, frequently experienced discrimination. After one year there, Coleman decided to join the staff of The Washington Post based on the advice of Joel Dreyfuss, who was one of the newspaper's editors. Coleman initially covered a local news beat in Montgomery County, Maryland, and was transferred to Washington, D.C. around the time of Mayor Marion Barry's election in 1979. At this point in the interview, Coleman talks about Mayor Barry's electoral strategy, which focused on increasing voter participation and appealing to key racial demographics.

Video Oral History Interview with Milton Coleman, Section A2013\_125\_001\_007, TRT: 7:32:02 ?

Milton Coleman joined the staff of The Washington Post as a reporter in 1976. He was mentored by publisher Donald E. Graham, executive editor Ben Bradlee and Washington D.C. editor Herb Denton. Under Denton's leadership, Coleman and his colleagues focused on covering the African American community in Washington, D.C., which was previously ignored by white newspapers. Coleman was promoted to the role of assistant city editor in 1980, and later became the newspaper's city editor. In this position, he was responsible for the work of Janet Cooke, an African American reporter whose story of an eight year old heroin addict won the Pulitzer Prize. However, after the Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia was unable to locate the child, Cooke confessed to fabricating the article and her collegiate qualifications. While she was forced to resign, Coleman did not face repercussions. Additionally, Coleman talks about the problem of gun violence in Washington, D.C.