

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ellis Cose

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Cose, Ellis Jonathan, 1951-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ellis Cose,
Dates:	July 13, 2013 and September 21, 2016
Bulk Dates:	2013 and 2016
Physical Description:	12 uncompressed MOV digital video files (5:37:27).
Abstract:	Newspaper reporter Ellis Cose (1951 -) was best known for his feature writing in Newsweek magazine, where he was a contributing editor from 1993 to 2010, and his books on race in the United States, most notably <i>The Rage of a Privileged Class</i> . Cose was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 13, 2013 and September 21, 2016, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_209
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Journalist Ellis Cose was born on February 20, 1951 in Chicago, Illinois to Raney and Jetta Cose. He discovered early that he had a distinctive voice as a writer. While a student at Lane Technical High School, his 140-page essay on the 1968 riots piqued the interest of an English teacher who suggested that he submit his essay to Gwendolyn Brooks, then the Poet Laureate of the State of Illinois, who invited him to her writers' group. At age nineteen, in 1970, Cose became a weekly columnist for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, making him the youngest editorial page

columnist employed by a major Chicago daily. While working for the *Sun-Times*, he graduated with his B.A. degree in psychology from the University of Illinois in 1972. Cose then graduated with his M.A. degree in science, technology and public policy from the George Washington University in 1978.

In 1979, Cose became an editorial writer and columnist for the *Detroit Free Press*. He then received a fellowship with the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences in 1981. In 1982, Cose became a special writer for *USA Today*; and, in 1983, he began a three-year term as president of the Institute for Journalism Education at the University of California at Berkeley. In 1987, he held a fellowship with the Gannett Center for Media Studies at Columbia University in New York City before moving on to the *New York Daily News* in 1991, where he served as an editorial page editor. In 1993, Cose was hired by *Newsweek* as a contributing editor where he remained until 2010.

Cose is the author of *A Nation of Strangers: Prejudice, Politics and the Populating of America* (1992), *The Rage of a Privileged Class* (1993), *Color-Blind: Seeing Beyond Race In A Race-Obsessed World* (2002), *The Envy Of The World: On Being a Black Man in America* (2002), *Bone to Pick: Of Forgiveness, Reconciliation, Reparation and Revenge* (2004), and *The End of Anger* (2011).

Cose lives in New York City with his wife, attorney Lee Llambelis. They have one daughter, Elisa Maria.

Ellis Cose was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 13, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Ellis Cose was conducted by Harriette Cole and Larry Crowe on July 13, 2013 and September 21, 2016, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 12 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Newspaper reporter Ellis Cose (1951 -) was best known for his feature writing in *Newsweek* magazine, where he was a contributing editor from 1993 to 2010, and his books on race in the United States, most notably *The Rage of a Privileged Class*.

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:

Cose, Ellis Jonathan, 1951-

Cole, Harriette (Interviewer)

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Cose, Ellis Jonathan, 1951---Interviews

African American authors--Interviews.

African American journalists--Interviews.

African American editors--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Newspaper Reporter

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 Ellis Cose, July 13, 2013 and September 21, 2016. 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 Ellis Cose, Section
A2013_209_001_001, TRT: 1:29:00 2013/07/13

Ellis Jonathan Cose slates the interview and lists his favorites. He talks about his mother, Jetta Mae Cose, who was born in West Point, Mississippi. He remembers learning how the family's land had been stolen from them, that his mother was previously married with a son and later that his mother and his brother both died of illnesses. He talks about his father, Raney Cose, who was born in Louisiana, but left at a young age. He describes his father's various jobs, which included prospecting in Mexico, working as a cowboy in the West, and working at an industrial laundry in Chicago, Illinois, where Cose was born on February 20, 1951 and he takes after his father's cerebral and taciturn personality. Cose also discusses his successful siblings and their occupations.

African American mothers.

African American fathers.

Brothers and sisters.

Death.

Video Oral History Interview with Ellis Cose, Section
A2013_209_001_002, TRT: 2:29:49 2013/07/13

Ellis Jonathan Cose describes moving into the Henry Horner Housing Projects in Chicago, Illinois, his impressions of the neighborhoods on the West Side, and the effects of The Chicago Riots of 1966 and 1968 on those neighborhoods. Cose then describes his earliest childhood memory and the sights, sounds, and smells of growing up. He talks about playing ping-pong, basketball, what he liked to read, and his precociousness in school. Cose recalls selling comic books and homework assignments to his elementary school peers, and feeling dissatisfied with class. Cose also recalls an encouraging teacher in elementary school. Cose then describes his involvement in church and the United League Boys Club, and the lack of parent and teacher involvement in the under-privileged neighborhoods in Chicago, Illinois. African American neighborhoods--Illinois--Chicago. Public Housing--Illinois--Chicago. Riots--Illinois--Chicago. Childhood and youth--Activities--Illinois--Chicago. African Americans--Education, Elementary--Illinois--Chicago. African American churches--Illinois--Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with Ellis Cose, Section
A2013_209_001_003, TRT: 3:31:26 2013/07/13

Ellis Jonathan Cose describes the racial makeup of grade schools in Chicago, Illinois, how his elementary and middle schools focused on “maintaining order” rather than educating, and teachers’ assumptions about students’ capabilities. Cose describes the “weapons checks” that they performed at McKinley Upper Grade Center, and his awareness of the Civil Rights Movement. He then talks about learning the piano, blues music on the West Side of Chicago, and playing in bands with Verdine White and his brothers. Cose describes the rivalry between the West Side and South Side of Chicago, entering Lane Technical College Prep High School, and his first experiences around white people. Cose then recalls feeling

unchallenged by English courses until a teacher allowed him to write on riots in America, a subject that interested him.

African Americans--Education--Illinois--Chicago.

Civil rights movement.

White, Verdine.

Riots--United States.

English--Study and teaching.

Video Oral History Interview with Ellis Cose, Section
A2013_209_001_004, TRT: 4:28:32 2013/07/13

Ellis Jonathan Cose describes the violence he witnessed during the Chicago Riots of 1966, the first manuscript he wrote on riots in America, and his teacher, Mrs. Klinger, who encouraged him to send his manuscript to Gwendolyn Brooks. He describes going to meet Gwendolyn Brooks at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago, Illinois and her insistence that he become a writer. Gwendolyn Brooks invited Cose to join her writers' group on the South Side of Chicago, where he met novelists and poets who were much older. Cose describes his mentor, Ronald Fair, meeting Sam Greenlee, and the novel that he wrote when he seventeen years old, which was accepted by a press but never published. Cose also describes his jobs, dating, and his social life in high school.

Riots--Illinois--Chicago.

Brooks, Gwendolyn, 1917-2000.

Mentoring.

Vocational guidance--Illinois--Chicago.

Fair, Ronald L.

Greenlee, Sam, 1930-2014.

African Americans--Education, Secondary--Illinois--Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with Ellis Cose, Section
A2013_209_001_005, TRT: 5:27:34 2013/07/13

Ellis Jonathan Cose recalls earning a scholarship to attend the University of Illinois at Chicago, and the historical incidents surrounding his high school graduation. Cose also describes the Chicago riots, his mother's protective

concerns, his rhetoric teacher in college, and his involvement in the Black Students Association. Cose describes the attitudes of the African American community toward the 1968 Democratic National Convention, and the assassinations of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark. Cose talks about his decision to work for the Chicago Sun-Times when he was eighteen years old, his eventual promotion to become a weekly columnist there, and his job as managing editor of the Englewood Bulletin. University of Illinois at Chicago.

Riots--Illinois--Chicago.

African American mothers.

Democratic National Convention (1968 : Chicago, Ill.).

Hampton, Fred, 1948-1969.

Chicago sun-times.

Video Oral History Interview with Ellis Cose, Section
A2013_209_001_006, TRT: 6:27:31 2013/07/13

Ellis Jonathan Cose describes becoming the first black reporter for the Chicago Sun-Times, working for the Englewood Bulletin, Lu Palmer's departure from the Chicago Daily News, his column in the Chicago Sun-Times and his coverage of political conventions. Cose then talks about his psychology degree, working full time for the Chicago Sun-Times after his college graduation, and his first big report on the Cabrini-Green Housing Project. He describes Lu Palmer's Black Express and its financial collapse, reporting for the Washington Bureau and living in both Chicago, Illinois and Washington, D.C. Cose closes the interview by describing his coverage of school desegregation and the campaign of President Jimmy Carter.

Journalism.

Chicago Daily News, Inc.

Chicago sun-times.

Public housing--Illinois--Chicago.

Palmer, Lu.

Carter, Jimmy, 1924-.

School integration--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Ellis Cose, Section
A2013_209_002_007, TRT: 7:25:27 2016/09/21

This tape is not published to THMDA. Cose talks about his involvement with the Pinkerton foundation as the senior advisor. Cose also describes how he started writing and when he decided to become a writer. Cose talks about his influences in school growing up in Chicago, Illinois

Video Oral History Interview with Ellis Cose, Section
A2013_209_002_008, TRT: 8:32:04 2016/09/21

This tape is not published to THMDA. Cose remembers writing for his school newspaper and community newspaper 'The Englewood Bulletin' in Chicago, Illinois. Cose talks about honing his voice as an editor and a writer. Cose then talks about his move to Washington D.C. and why he chose to leave Chicago. Cose also gets a master's degree from George Washington in public policy.

Video Oral History Interview with Ellis Cose, Section
A2013_209_002_009, TRT: 9:28:00 2016/09/21

This tape is not published to THMDA. Cose describes the number of fellowships he's held throughout his career. Cose remembers becoming a special writer for 'USA Today' in 1983 and writing his book 'The Press.'

Video Oral History Interview with Ellis Cose, Section
A2013_209_002_010, TRT: 10:30:31 2016/09/21

This tape is not published to THMDA. Cose remembers two major news stories in the 1990s, the Clarence Thomas hearings and the Rodney King trial. Later Cose became a writer for 'Newsweek' magazine and talks about his work and travels with the magazine.

Video Oral History Interview with Ellis Cose, Section
A2013_209_002_011, TRT: 11:28:54 2016/09/21

This tape is not published to THMDA. Cose remembers publishing his book, 'A Man's World: How Real is Male Privilege' in 1995. Cose also talks about his work on the theory of being color-blind in terms of race and describes his work, 'Color-Blind: Seeing Beyond Race in a Race-Obsessed World.'

Video Oral History Interview with Ellis Cose, Section
A2013_209_002_012, TRT: 12:18:39 2016/09/21

This tape is not published to THMDA. Cose talks about his radio program that he started at 'Newsweek,' called 'Against the Odds.' Cose also remembers the financial crisis between 2008-2010. Cose describes the Pinkerton Foundation and their mission of helping at risk youth. Cose reflects on how the internet has changed the field of journalism. Cose ends the interview by reflecting on his life and career.