

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Carol Sutton Lewis

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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>	Lewis, Carol Sutton, 1959-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Carol Sutton Lewis,
<b>Dates:</b>	October 22, 2013
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2013
<b>Physical Description:</b>	8 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:44:37).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Civic leader and education advisor Carol Sutton Lewis (1959 - ) , founder of Ground Control Parenting, has served on the boards of WNET.org, Early Steps, Stanford Law School, the Collegiate School, the Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies, and the Studio Museum in Harlem. Lewis was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 22, 2013, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2013_272
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civic leader and attorney Carol Sutton Lewis was born on September 26, 1959 in New York City, New York. Her mother, Renee Sutton, was a public school teacher; her father, Oliver Sutton, was a judge and businessman. Lewis graduated from the High School of Music and Art in New York, now Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School, in 1976. She went on to receive her B.A. degree in English from the University of Pennsylvania in 1980, and her J.D. degree from Stanford Law School in 1983.

Upon being admitted to practice law, Lewis was hired as an associate at the law firm of Dow, Lohnes & Albertson in 1983. She worked there until 1987, when she was hired as an associate at the Apollo Theatre. After a brief stint at the Apollo Theatre, Sutton Lewis worked at Home Box Office from 1987 until 1989 before being hired as an associate in business development at WTTW Chicago, where she remained until 1992. In 2011, Lewis launched, and began writing for, the website entitled Ground Control Parenting, a blog designed for parents of children of color with a particular focus on issues affecting boys. She and her husband, William M. Lewis, founded the Carol Sutton Lewis and William M Lewis, Jr. Charitable Foundation, which she manages.

Lewis has served on the boards of several educational organizations, including WNET.org, Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, East Harlem Tutorial Program, Harlem School of the Arts, and Early Steps, an organization devoted to increasing the presence of students of color in New York City private schools. Since 1998, she has served on the board of directors of the Studio Museum in Harlem, where she eventually became vice chairman of the board. In 2008, Lewis was elected to Stanford Law School's board of trustees, and, in 2010, she began serving as a board member of the Collegiate School. Lewis was also elected a board member of the Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies in 2011. She has also been honored by receiving the Humanitarian Award for Leadership in Education from the National Urban Technology Center.

Lewis lives with her husband in New York City. They have three children: Tyler, Carter and Andrew.

Carol Sutton Lewis was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on October 22, 2013.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Carol Sutton Lewis was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on October 22, 2013, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 8 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Civic leader and education advisor Carol Sutton Lewis (1959 - ), founder of Ground Control Parenting, has served on the boards of WNET.org, Early Steps, Stanford Law School, the Collegiate School, the Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies, and the Studio Museum in Harlem.

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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:**

Lewis, Carol Sutton, 1959-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews

Lewis, Carol Sutton, 1959---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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## **Occupations:**

Civic Leader

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

CivicMakers

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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 Carol Sutton Lewis, October 22, 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 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).

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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 Carol Sutton Lewis, Section  
A2013\_272\_001\_001, TRT: 1:33:23 2013/10/22

Carol Sutton Lewis was born on September 26, 1959 in New York City, New York to Oliver Sutton and Renee Hopkins Sutton. Her father was one of fifteen children born to Samuel and Lillian Sutton in San Antonio, Texas. Lewis' paternal grandfather was a high school principal and mattress factory owner. Lewis describes her father's upbringing and the Sutton family legacy in San Antonio. Most, if not all, of Lewis' aunts and uncles were college educated. Among her uncles were Pullman porter Bill Sutton, Texas State legislator G.J. Sutton, and Tuskegee Institute scientist John Sutton, who was sent to Russia by George Washington Carver. Another uncle, the legendary Percy Sutton, owned a law practice in Harlem with Lewis' father. Lewis' maternal grandparents migrated to New York from the West Indies. Her mother was raised in Queens and Harlem, and was the first in her family to attend college. Although Lewis' father wanted her to attend Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, she was not impressed by a campus visit.

Video Oral History Interview with Carol Sutton Lewis, Section  
A2013\_272\_001\_002, TRT: 2:31:05 2013/10/22

Carol Sutton Lewis talks about her mother's West Indian heritage and how her parents met. As a young girl, Lewis' father promised to pay for her college education, and later sent her to the University of Pennsylvania and Stanford Law School. Her mother also paid for a trip to the South of France. Like other members of his family, Lewis' father

was politically active and ran for his first judgeship. Lewis joined her parents in picketing Rochdale Village as a young girl. She attended public school because her father did not think she needed additional attention to thrive academically. Lewis recalls her earliest memories of growing up in New York City's Jamaica neighborhood in Queens. She learned to read at the age of three and skipped second grade. Lewis attended P.S. 116 where her third grade teacher was Portia Paterson, the mother of former New York Governor David Paterson. She also talks about the sights, sounds, and smells of her childhood, her cultural education in the city, and her religious background.

Video Oral History Interview with Carol Sutton Lewis, Section A2013\_272\_001\_003, TRT: 3:33:03 2013/10/22

Carol Sutton Lewis recounts her elementary school experience at P.S. 116 in New York City, New York where she excelled academically, but her older brother, Paul, struggled. Lewis also had an older half-brother, Oliver Sutton, Jr. As a child, Lewis' family vacationed to San Antonio, Texas in the summer to visit her father's relatives. The family stayed at Howard Johnson's when they could and drove through the night in other parts of the South that were not welcoming to blacks. Lewis remembers encounters with policemen. She also shares her memories of Christmas as a child. Her father owned a criminal law practice with his brother, Percy Sutton, who represented Malcolm X. After Malcolm X's assassination, Lewis attended a birthday party for Malcolm X's daughter, Attallah Shabazz. In the early 1970s, Lewis' family moved from Queens to New York City's Harlem neighborhood where her father and uncle were politically active. The Suttons also had strong associations with the Kennedys and President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Video Oral History Interview with Carol Sutton Lewis, Section A2013\_272\_001\_004, TRT: 4:29:21 2013/10/22

Carol Sutton Lewis enrolled at the High School of Music & Art in New York City, New York in 1972 and enjoyed her courses in the humanities. She recalls her mother's love for teaching and an adult encounter with her third grade teacher, Portia Paterson, wife of HistoryMaker Basil

Paterson and mother to New York Governor David Paterson. Lewis also talks about her experience of the city as a teenager in the 1970s. She participated in Jack and Jill of America in Queens, and in Harlem after her family's move. Throughout her life, Lewis benefitted from being a descendent of the Sutton family, a well-educated, well-established, and affluent family. Although her father encouraged her to be a doctor, Lewis decided to follow in his footsteps as a lawyer. She describes her college application process and her decision to enroll at the University of Pennsylvania in 1976. In college, a white professor told Lewis she would not succeed in law school, but black law professor Ralph Smith encouraged her to pursue her dream.

Video Oral History Interview with Carol Sutton Lewis, Section A2013\_272\_001\_005, TRT: 5:32:41 2013/10/22

Carol Sutton Lewis entered Stanford Law School in Stanford, California in 1980. Prior to law school, Lewis' father, Oliver Sutton, exposed her to life on the bench by inviting her into his courtroom. She talks about her law school experience and her summer internships at Stroock & Stooch & Lavan, CBS Records, and Dow Lohnes & Albertson. She also clerked for HistoryMaker Thelton Henderson during her third year. Lewis' father passed away shortly after her graduation from law school in 1983. His death affected Lewis' interest in the law and her performance on the bar examination which she retook. After law school, Lewis worked at Dow Lohnes & Albertson in Washington, D.C. and met her future husband, HistoryMaker William Lewis. Unhappy, she returned home to New York City to work for her uncle, Percy Sutton at the Apollo Theater. Her proposal to become part of the family business was rejected by her uncle. In 1987, Lewis started working at HBO, but left in 1989 to move with to Chicago, Illinois with William Lewis.

Video Oral History Interview with Carol Sutton Lewis, Section A2013\_272\_001\_006, TRT: 6:32:09 2013/10/22

Carol Sutton Lewis to Chicago, Illinois after her future husband, HistoryMaker William Lewis accepted a promotion at Morgan Stanley in 1989. The couple settled

in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood, and Lewis started a production company with Royal Kennedy. She also worked under Katherine Lauderdale, the General Counsel for PBS-TV WTTW, in Chicago. In 1992, the Lewises returned to New York City and had their first child. Lewis talks about raising her children. She became active at the Studio Museum in Harlem during a period of organizational restructuring at the museum after the departures of HistoryMaker Mary Schmidt Campbell and Kinshasha Holman Conwill. The museum's board of directors was led by Lowery Sims and Thelma Golden, and also included HistoryMakers Raymond McGuire, George Knox, and Sandra Grymes. Lewis describes her role in the museum's annual fundraising gala as well as the gala fundraiser following 9/11. She also comments on the Studio Museum of Harlem's financial health and its future goals.

Video Oral History Interview with Carol Sutton Lewis, Section  
A2013\_272\_001\_007, TRT: 7:28:49 2013/10/22

Carol Sutton Lewis' family moved to New York City's Harlem neighborhood when she was a girl. In her adult life, Lewis returned to Harlem through her role as vice chair of the board of directors at the Studio Museum in Harlem. She shares her observations of shifting dynamics and gentrification in the neighborhood. Lewis also talks about her future goals and the education of her three children. Inspired by her brother and her two sons, Lewis founded Ground Control Parenting in 2011. The parenting blog is geared toward parents of children of color, particularly boys, who desire to maintain their educational legacies. Some of Lewis' parenting philosophies were influenced by her involvement in a Barnard Toddler Center parent group. Lewis also talks about her marriage, her legacy, and how she would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Carol Sutton Lewis, Section  
A2013\_272\_001\_008, TRT: 8:04:06 2013/10/22

Carol Sutton Lewis narrates her photographs.