

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with James M. Harkless

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Harkless, James M., 1931-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with James M. Harkless,
Dates:	January 29, 2014, January 30, 2017 and March 17, 2014
Bulk Dates:	2014 and 2017
Physical Description:	17 uncompressed MOV digital video files (8:31:48).
Abstract:	Labor lawyer James M. Harkless (1931 -) has been a labor lawyer and arbitrator for over fifty years. He was the first African American President of the National Academy of Arbitrators. Harkless was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 29, 2014, January 30, 2017 and March 17, 2014, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2014_007
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Labor lawyer James M. Harkless was born on April 19, 1931 in Detroit, Michigan. He attended Harvard University, where he received his A.B. degree in history in 1952. While there, he was the first African American to be elected president of the Harvard Glee Club. Harkless went on to attend Harvard Law School and earned his J.D. degree in 1955.

Upon graduation, Harkless clerked for a justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court and was appointed chief clerk in 1956. From 1957 to 1960, he worked as an associate in a Boston area law firm, where he represented unions in labor relations. In 1961, Harkless served as general counsel for a sub-committee of the U.S. House Education and Labor Committee. Then, from 1962 to 1964, he became the first African American appellate court attorney in the Office of the National Labor Relations Board General Counsel. Harkless went on to work as confidential assistant to the Commissioner of Customs, as executive secretary of the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity, and as senior associate and vice president of a Washington, D.C. consulting firm. In 1970, Harkless was hired as an arbitrator and associate umpire for Bethlehem Steel Company and United Steelworkers of America. He then received arbitration cases through the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, the American Arbitration Association, and the National Mediation Board, as well as selections as permanent arbitrator for private companies, federal agencies, and their unions. Harkless has issued more than 3,000 decisions covering most labor-management issues.

Harkless has served in many other organizations, often as a board member. In 1972, the United States President appointed Harkless to serve on the Special Railroad Emergency Boards. He then worked as part-time chairman of the Washington, D.C. Board of Labor Relations from 1974 until 1978. Harkless also served as a member of the Prince George's County, Maryland Public Employee Relations Board from 1975 to 1978 and as a member of the Employee Relations Council of the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority from 1993 to 1995. From 1985 to 2006, he was chairman of the IUE-GM (Delphi) Legal Services Plan. Harkless was appointed a member of the

Foreign Service Grievance Board in 1990, served as a consultant on arbitration to a South African government commission in 1998, and was elected the first African American President of the National Academy of Arbitrators in 1998. In 2005, the College of Labor and Employment Lawyers made him an honorary fellow.

Harkless lives in Washington, D.C.

James M. Harkless was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 29, 2014 and January 30, 2017.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with James M. Harkless was conducted by Larry Crowe on January 29, 2014, January 30, 2017 and March 17, 2014, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 17 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Labor lawyer James M. Harkless (1931 -) has been a labor lawyer and arbitrator for over fifty years. He was the first African American President of the National Academy of Arbitrators.

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:

Harkless, James M., 1931-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Harkless, James M., 1931---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Labor Lawyer

HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers

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 James M. Harkless, January 29, 2014, January 30, 2017 and March 17, 2014. 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 James M. Harkless, Section A2014_007_001_001, TRT: 1:30:13 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with James M. Harkless, Section A2014_007_001_002, TRT: 2:28:36 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with James M. Harkless, Section A2014_007_001_003, TRT: 3:29:46 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with James M. Harkless, Section A2014_007_001_004, TRT: 4:28:50 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with James M. Harkless, Section A2014_007_001_005, TRT: 5:28:48 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with James M. Harkless, Section A2014_007_001_006, TRT: 6:28:38 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with James M. Harkless, Section A2014_007_002_007, TRT: 7:28:55 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with James M. Harkless, Section A2014_007_002_008, TRT: 8:26:59 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with James M. Harkless, Section A2014_007_002_009, TRT: 9:30:03 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with James M. Harkless, Section A2014_007_002_010, TRT: 10:31:30 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with James M. Harkless, Section A2014_007_002_011, TRT: 11:29:14 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with James M. Harkless, Section A2014_007_002_012, TRT: 12:30:07 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with James M. Harkless, Section A2014_007_003_013, TRT: 13:31:42 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with James M. Harkless, Section A2014_007_003_014, TRT: 14:30:16 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with James M. Harkless, Section A2014_007_003_015, TRT: 15:33:02 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with James M. Harkless, Section A2014_007_003_016, TRT: 16:29:22 ?
- Video Oral History Interview with James M. Harkless, Section A2014_007_003_017, TRT: 17:35:47 ?