

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Roy S. Johnson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Johnson, Roy S., 1956-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Roy S. Johnson,
Dates:	January 17, 2014
Bulk Dates:	2014
Physical Description:	8 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:28:01).
Abstract:	Journalist Roy S. Johnson (1956 -) was the founding editor of Savoy magazine, and held senior editorial positions at Sports Illustrated, Money, Fortune, Men's Fitness and The History Channel Magazine. He was the co-author of three books: Magic's Touch, Outrageous!, and Aspire Higher. Johnson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 17, 2014, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2014_010
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Journalist Roy S. Johnson was born on March 19, 1956 in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He attended the prestigious Holland Hall Preparatory School in Tulsa, Oklahoma and went on to graduate from Stanford University with his B.A. degree in political science.

In 1978, Johnson was hired as a reporter for *Sports Illustrated*. From 1982 until 1989, he worked at the *New York Times* and the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*,

before returning to *Sports Illustrated* as a senior editor in 1989. Johnson went on to briefly work for *Money*, and was then hired as an editor-at-large for *Fortune* magazine. After a short stint at *Fortune*, he joined Vanguard Media, Inc. as an editorial director. In 2001, while working at Vanguard, Johnson conceived and co-launched *Savoy Magazine*. In 2003, he returned to *Sports Illustrated*, where he worked as an assistant managing editor. Johnson was then hired as a consultant for *Men's Fitness* magazine, and, in 2007, he was promoted to editor-in-chief. He has also written for many other publications and websites, including *Life Goes Strong* and ESPN.com.

In 2006, Johnson founded RSJ Media Solutions, a company that offers digital content strategy and media training. He also founded Fit! Live! Win! LLC in 2011, a digital corporate wellness communications firm. In 2012, Johnson founded Write on Essays!, and was named editor-in-chief and executive director of the History Channel's magazine and the History Channel Club. He has been a frequent television and radio contributor on the topics of sports, fitness, nutrition, wellness and healthy living. Johnson has also served as executive producer of several television programs that have aired on national broadcast and cable networks, including NBC, Fox and TNT. He has co-authored three books: *Magic's Touch* with Earvin Johnson; *Outrageous!: The Fine Life and Flagrant Good Times of Basketball's Irresistible Force* with Charles Barkley; and *Aspire Higher* with Avery Johnson.

Johnson has been a longstanding member of the National Association of Black Journalists, and has served on the board of the International Athletic Foundation. He also created the Roy S. Johnson Foundation, which provides financial assistance to minority youth from his hometown in Oklahoma.

Johnson lives in New Rochelle, NY with his wife Barbara and two children, Edwyn and Missy.

Roy Johnson was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 16, 2014.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Roy S. Johnson was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on January 17, 2014, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 8 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Journalist Roy S. Johnson (1956 -) was the founding editor of *Savoy* magazine, and held senior editorial positions at *Sports Illustrated*, *Money*, *Fortune*, *Men's Fitness* and *The History Channel Magazine*. He was the co-author of three books: *Magic's Touch*, *Outrageous!*, and

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:

Johnson, Roy S., 1956-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Johnson, Roy S., 1956---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Journalist

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 Roy S. Johnson, January 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 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 Roy S. Johnson, Section
A2014_010_001_001, TRT: 1:30:52 2014/01/17

Roy Johnson was born on March 19, 1956 in Tulsa, Oklahoma to Ida Brooks Jenkins and Roy Johnson. His mother graduated from the Colored Agricultural and Normal University in Langston, Oklahoma, and raised Johnson in Tulsa's all-black Greenwood neighborhood. In 1921, Greenwood's affluent Black Wall Street was destroyed by a mob of white supremacists. Over the next three decades, the area was rebuilt by the African American owners of businesses like the Mann Brothers Grocery Store. In Greenwood, Johnson and his family belonged to the Vernon A.M.E. Church, which was pastored by civil rights leader Ben Hill. Johnson attended Paul Laurence Dunbar Elementary School, where his mother was a substitute teacher. His father and paternal uncle worked as bellhops at the Mayo Hotel, and his father later purchased Kyle's Sundry Store. After Johnson's father died of cancer in 1968, his mother sold the store and became a full-time teacher. She later married Isaac Jenkins, who was a longtime family friend.

Video Oral History Interview with Roy S. Johnson, Section
A2014_010_001_002, TRT: 2:26:57 2014/01/17

Roy Johnson began his education Paul Laurence Dunbar

Elementary School in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where his mother, Ida Brooks Jenkins, worked as a substitute teacher. He entered the seventh grade at George Washington Carver Junior High School, and then transferred to a predominantly white private school in south Tulsa called Holland Hall. While there, Johnson was excluded from social activities because of his race, and once received a threatening note. After his father, Roy Johnson, died from prostate cancer, Johnson's mother sold the family business and became a full-time teacher. She received support from Johnson's paternal uncle, James B. Johnson, who helped raise him and his younger brother, James Johnson. Johnson was also mentored by another uncle, Marques Haynes, who founded the Harlem Magicians basketball team. After receiving his diploma, Johnson enrolled at Stanford University in Stanford, California. His mother later married a family friend named Isaac Jenkins, whose spouse had also passed away.

Video Oral History Interview with Roy S. Johnson, Section
A2014_010_001_003, TRT: 3:29:16 2014/01/17

Roy Johnson studied journalism at Stanford University in Stanford, California. While there, he served as a deejay at KZSU Radio, and became a reporter for The Stanford Daily. In 1975, Johnson interned at the Tulsa Daily World newspaper. The next year, he reported on the Patty Hearst trial for The Stanford Daily. He secured a summer internship at the advertising agency of McCann Erickson, Inc., but disliked the industry's discriminatory marketing strategies. He was later arrested by campus police while covering a student-led protest against apartheid. After graduating in 1978, Johnson was hired as a researcher for Sports Illustrated. He established relationships with numerous athletes, and published articles about Olympian wrestler Kenny Monday and basketball player Bill Cartwright. Johnson went on to work as a sports reporter for The New York Times, and later returned to Sports Illustrated. At this point, he also remembers learning about Magic Johnson's HIV diagnosis prior to the press announcement in 1991.

Video Oral History Interview with Roy S. Johnson, Section
A2014_010_001_004, TRT: 4:32:48 2014/01/17

Roy Johnson was invited to apply for a sports reporter position at The New York Times by Sandy Padwe, who had been a senior editor at Sports Illustrated. Johnson was hired as a beat reporter for the New Jersey Nets. In this role, he tried to change the style of The New York Times' sports articles, which he found overly formulaic. Frustrated by The New York Times' bias against black columnists, Johnson joined the Atlanta Constitution in 1987. That year, Major League Baseball executive Al Campanis' racist remarks aired on 'Nightline,' exposing the discrimination against African Americans in professional sports. Even so, Johnson's columns about black topics were met with backlash from white readers in Atlanta, Georgia, and his editors attempted to limit his writing to other topics. In 1989, Johnson was recruited by managing editor Mark Mulvoy to return to Sports Illustrated as a senior editor. Johnson accepted the position, but soon encountered resistance from the staff because of his race and young age.

Video Oral History Interview with Roy S. Johnson, Section
A2014_010_001_005, TRT: 5:28:02 2014/01/17

Roy Johnson left Sports Illustrated for the second time after being denied a promotion by managing editor Mark Mulvoy. He was then hired as the senior editor in charge of television content for Money magazine by managing editor Frank Lalli, whom Johnson had met while serving on the committee for the first digital media platform at Time, Inc. When editor-in-chief Norman Pearlstine announced a new diversity initiative at Time, Inc., Johnson contacted him to pitch the concept for a black magazine about culture, fashion and current affairs. Pearlstine approved the idea, and Johnson attempted to form a joint publishing venture with black magazines like Vibe and Essence. However, they lacked trust in Times, Inc., and the partnerships fell through. Then, Pearlstine's associate John Huey offered Johnson an editor-at-large position at Fortune magazine. In 1997, Johnson's piece about 'The New Black Power' on Wall Street was featured on the cover of Fortune magazine.

Video Oral History Interview with Roy S. Johnson, Section
A2014_010_001_006, TRT: 6:31:12 2014/01/17

Roy Johnson joined Vanguard Media in 2000, one year after it was founded by Keith Clinkscales in 1999. At the company, Johnson served as the creator and editorial director of Savoy magazine, which he originally developed for Time Inc. The magazine was named after the Savoy Ballroom in New York City's Harlem neighborhood. The company was supported by investments from BET executive Robert L. Johnson and Frederick Terrell of Provender Capital Group, LLC. In 2003, Johnson returned to Sports Illustrated as an assistant managing editor. Later, he became the executive director of the 'Sports Illustrated Monday Night Live' radio program and the 'Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Model Search' reality television show. He also created digital content for Sport Illustrated. In 2007, Johnson became the editor-in-chief of Men's Fitness. He was one of the first black journalists to head a general market publication. He was laid off in 2011, and subsequently founded the digital corporate wellness firm Fit!Live!Win!.

Video Oral History Interview with Roy S. Johnson, Section
A2014_010_001_007, TRT: 7:09:56 2014/01/17

Roy Johnson talks about his children, Edwyn Johnson and Anna Johnson. He also describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community. Johnson concludes this part of the interview by reflecting upon his legacy and the legacy of his generation.

Video Oral History Interview with Roy S. Johnson, Section
A2014_010_001_008, TRT: 8:18:58 2014/01/17

Roy Johnson narrates his photographs.