

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Gregory Davis

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Davis, Gregory, 1948-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Gregory Davis,
Dates:	February 20, 2014
Bulk Dates:	2014
Physical Description:	5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:34:40).
Abstract:	Broadcast chief executive Gregory Davis (1948 -) is the founder of Davis Broadcasting Inc., which runs ten radio stations based in Columbus and Atlanta, Georgia. These stations include WFXE-FM, or Foxie 105, the number one radio station in the Columbus market since 1993. Davis was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 20, 2014, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2014_056
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Broadcasting CEO Gregory Davis was born in Fort Smith, Arkansas in September 24, 1948. He received his B.A. degree in biology from Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee. After serving in the United States Army, he returned to school and earned his master's degree from Eastern Michigan University.

Davis then began a twelve-year television career that took him to a number of major cities, including Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Detroit. From 1982 to 1986, he worked as a National/Local Sales Manager of Multimedia Broadcasting for WLW-TV in Cincinnati, Ohio. He began his company, Davis Broadcasting Inc., in 1986, when he acquired radio stations in Columbus and Augusta, Georgia. He later purchased stations in Macon, Columbus, and Atlanta, Georgia, as well as in Charlotte, North Carolina. In 2000, Davis sold the radio stations in Charlotte and Augusta to focus on building his operations in Columbus. Davis Broadcasting Inc. comprises ten radio stations based in Columbus and Atlanta, Georgia: WFXE-FM, WEAM-FM, WIOL-FM, WIOL-AM, WOKS-AM and WKZJ-FM in Columbus, and WCHK-FM (La Mega), WCHK-AM, WLKQ-FM (La Raza), and WNSY-FM in Atlanta. Its hip-hop and R&B station, WFXE-FM (Foxie 105), has been rated the number one radio station in the Columbus market since 1993. In 2004, La Raza became Atlanta's first Spanish language FM radio station. These ten stations offer a variety of music genres, including urban contemporary, gospel contemporary, Spanish language programming, and sports.

In addition to operating several radio stations, Davis Broadcasting Inc. has hosted many annual philanthropic events. These include the Women's Empowerment Luncheon, held each March for National Women's History Month, Family Day in the Parks, and the Needy Children's Christmas party, which provides three to four thousand needy children with gifts every Christmas. Davis also serves his community by participating on boards both locally and nationally. These include the Columbus Chamber of Commerce, Columbus Regional Hospital, United Way, Better Business Bureau, First Union Bank, and First Citizen Bank of North Carolina. He has also served on the

board for the National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters, the Georgia Association of Broadcasters, and the North Carolina Association of Broadcasters.

Davis and his wife Cheryl reside in Columbus, Georgia. They have three grown children, Geniece, Michelle, and Greg, Jr.

Gregory Davis was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 20, 2014.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Gregory Davis was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 20, 2014, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Broadcast chief executive Gregory Davis (1948 -) is the founder of Davis Broadcasting Inc., which runs ten radio stations based in Columbus and Atlanta, Georgia. These stations include WFXE-FM, or Foxie 105, the number one radio station in the Columbus market since 1993.

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:

Davis, Gregory, 1948-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Davis, Gregory, 1948---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Broadcast Chief Executive

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 Gregory Davis, February 20, 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 6/7/2022 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 Gregory Davis, Section A2014_056_001_001, TRT: 1:29:01
2014/02/20

Gregory Davis was born on September 24, 1948 in Fort Smith, Arkansas. He describes his family background. His mother, Rizetta Theola Davis (nee Gill), was born on September 18, 1924 in Bigelow, Arkansas to a schoolteacher and his wife, domestic worker Lillie Gill. Rizetta's family moved her to Fort Smith, Arkansas so she could attend Lincoln High School. After graduating from Lincoln, she attended Arkansas AM&N College at Pine Bluff, and then became one of the first African Americans to graduate from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, before returning to Lincoln to teach black history. Davis's father, Fred Davis, Jr., was born on October 16, 1924 in Fort Smith to glass cutter Fred Davis, Sr. and domestic worker Estella Davis (nee Parker). Davis' father served in the U.S. Navy during World War II and then worked as a bellman at Fort Smith hotel, before Davis found him a job with the local Colonial Baking Company. Davis talks about how his parents met, his parents' personalities, and his two siblings.

Video Oral History Interview with Gregory Davis, Section A2014_056_001_002, TRT: 2:28:25
2014/02/20

Gregory Davis talks about his childhood and school years in Fort Smith, Arkansas during the 1950s and 1960s. He grew up in a poor neighborhood near the Elm Grove Housing Project and belonged to the city's very small African-American community. At the First Baptist Church, he attended Sunday school and later became an usher; his maternal grandfather ran the church school. Although he was a Baptist, Davis attended Catholic schools. At St. John's Elementary School, he recalls combined sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade classes, and corporal punishment. He describes his memory of radio and television during his childhood as well as segregation in Fort Smith. He talks about the 1957 integration of public schools in Little Rock, Arkansas, and his own integration of St. Anne's High School in Fort Smith where he joined the football team. Though he was coolly received at first, his football successes eventually gained him popularity. He was elected team captain his senior year and paved the way for his younger brother.

Video Oral History Interview with Gregory Davis, Section A2014_056_001_003, TRT: 3:30:34
2014/02/20

Gregory Davis describes his high school and college years. At St. Anne's High School in Fort Smith, Arkansas, he was on the football team. However, he was unable to play until the third game of the season because of the racial discrimination of other southern schools. He talks about his academic performance, his participation in student government, and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963. Upon graduating in 1966, he received football scholarships to several colleges, but decided to play basketball at the local Westark Junior College. In 1968, he transferred to Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee, where he continued playing basketball, joined the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, and worked at the Colonial Baking Company. Davis received his B.S. degree in biology in 1970. Although he originally wanted to become a physical therapist, he accepted a position as community school director in Flint, Michigan where he worked until he was drafted into the U.S. military the following year for the Vietnam War.

Video Oral History Interview with Gregory Davis, Section A2014_056_001_004, TRT: 4:27:49
2014/02/20

Gregory Davis was stationed at Fort Gordon in Augusta, Georgia after he was

drafted into the U.S. Army in 1970. There, Davis protested the disproportionate assignment of African American soldiers in his platoon to Vietnam, and was reassigned to serve on the military police as well as in administrative positions in Europe. After his discharge in 1972, he taught at the U.S. Army Dependent Schools in London, England before returning to Flint, Michigan in 1973, where he worked as an assistant principal at Cook Elementary School. At the same time, he pursued a master's degree in education at Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti. The school nurse at Cook Elementary noticed Davis's interpersonal skills and convinced him to interview with her husband for an advertising sales job at Flint's WJRT-TV. He worked there from 1974 to 1978, when he was hired by WKBD in Detroit, Michigan. Davis talks about meeting his wife and their marriage in 1976. After a year at WKBD, he moved on to Detroit's ABC affiliate, WXYZ-TV.

Video Oral History Interview with Gregory Davis, Section A2014_056_001_005, TRT: 5:38:51
2014/02/20

Gregory Davis describes his television and radio career in the 1980s. In 1979, he started working as an advertising salesman for ABC affiliate, WXYZ, in Detroit, Michigan where he was promoted to national spot sales. Davis declined a promotion to New York City and stayed in the Midwest where he accepted a job with NBC affiliate, WLW-TV in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1982. By 1986, he was interested in buying his own station. While the FCC incentivized selling to minorities with tax breaks, he faced difficulty receiving a loan, and when Davis had enough money to buy the NBC affiliate in Columbus, Georgia, the seller backed out, anticipating the success of the upcoming 'Cosby Show.' Davis talks about the beginning of Davis Broadcasting in 1986 after he purchased four radio stations in Columbus and Augusta, Georgia, which played oldies, R&B, and gospel music. Davis describes the challenges he faced selling advertising for stations focusing on African-American programming and the shifting demographics of his audience.