

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with David A. Wilson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Wilson, David A., 1977-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with David A. Wilson,
Dates:	February 19, 2014
Bulk Dates:	2014
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:09:58).
Abstract:	Journalist and media executive David Wilson (1977 -) wrote and directed the film Meeting David Wilson and cofounded TheGrio.com. Wilson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 19, 2014, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2014_063
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Journalist and media executive David A. Wilson was born in Newark, New Jersey in 1977 to Vernon and Beverly Wilson. One of ten children, he was raised in the Georgia King Village housing projects in Newark. Wilson went on to attend Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey. In 1997, during his sophomore year in college, he was hired as an intern at WABC-TV in New York City, where he worked on the show *Like It Is* and was mentored by Gil Noble. Wilson received his B.S. degree in communications from Rowan University in 1999.

Upon graduation, Wilson worked at the assignment desk for local news outlets. In 2000, he was hired at Network News Service (NNS), where he served as lead producer and oversaw newsroom operations. Wilson went on to research and develop content for the award-winning CBS News program *48 Hours*. In 2005, he left his job at CBS, co-founded the film production company Three Part Media LLC, and began work on the film *Meeting David Wilson*, a documentary that chronicles Wilson's personal journey to find answers to today's racial disparities in America, where he served as director and writer. *Meeting David Wilson* premiered on MSNBC in 2008, and won the Radio-Television News Directors Association/UNITY: Journalists of Color Award.

In 2009, following the success of *Meeting David Wilson*, Wilson and Three Part Media founded NBC News' TheGrio.com, the first video-centric news community site devoted to providing African Americans with stories and perspectives that are underrepresented in existing national news outlets. Wilson first served as managing editor of TheGrio, and was named executive editor in 2011. In 2013, TheGrio became a division of the MSNBC cable channel.

Wilson has been honored as one of *The Network Journal's* 40 Under 40.

David Wilson was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 19, 2014.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with David A. Wilson was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on February 19, 2014, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Journalist and media executive David Wilson (1977 -) wrote and directed the film Meeting David Wilson and cofounded TheGrio.com.

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:

Wilson, David A., 1977-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Wilson, David A., 1977---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Journalist

Media 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 David A. Wilson, February 19, 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 David A. Wilson, Section A2014_063_001_001, TRT: 1:41:46 ?

David Wilson was born on April 15, 1977 in Newark, New Jersey to Beverly Walker Wilson and Vernon Wilson, Sr. His paternal great-grandfather, Ruben Wilson, Sr., was born into slavery in North Carolina. He became a preacher and founded several churches. Wilson's paternal grandfather, George L. Wilson, Sr., was born in North Carolina in 1883, and moved to New York City during the

Great Depression. He founded the first black church in Belleville, New Jersey, and later became the manager of a chemical plant in Newark. There, his second wife, Virginia Holloway Wilson, gave birth to Wilson's father in 1936. Although he did not complete high school, Wilson's father became a chemist for the Mennen Company and Beecham Group, plc. Wilson's mother was born in 1944 in Asbury Park, New Jersey to Ethel Walker. She was the oldest of nine siblings, and grew up in New York City. She met Wilson's father at the Bethesda Church of God in Christ in Newark. They married and had ten children, of whom Wilson was the seventh born.

Video Oral History Interview with David A. Wilson, Section A2014_063_001_002, TRT: 2:30:37 ?

David Wilson grew up during the 1980s in the Georgia King Village housing projects in Newark, New Jersey. His family was active at the Bethesda Church of God in Christ, which became a refuge from the violence of the crack cocaine epidemic. During Wilson's childhood, his father was laid off, and the family relied on food stamps. Wilson's parents, Beverly Walker Wilson and Vernon Wilson, Sr., emphasized the importance of education from the time their children were young. His father encouraged them to read The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal, and bought a Commodore 64 computer in 1984 to expose them to new technology. Wilson attended the 13th Avenue/Dr. MLK, Jr. School in Newark through the eighth grade. He then enrolled at the Milton Hershey School in Hershey, Pennsylvania to escape Newark's severely underfunded public schools. During Wilson's sophomore year, his parents divorced, and he returned to Newark. Wilson graduated from Newark Arts High School in the mid-1990s.

Video Oral History Interview with David A. Wilson, Section A2014_063_001_003, TRT: 3:33:11 ?

David Wilson was encouraged to pursue higher education by his older brother, Philip Wilson, and decided to enroll at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey. Influenced by his experiences of inequality, he planned to study political science, but soon became frustrated by the inefficacy of the politic process. Instead, Wilson studied communications and television under Professor Ned Eckhardt, who inspired his interest in documentary film. As a student, he created the documentary 'Hidden Heroes: African American Women in WWII,' which was narrated by Gil Noble and displayed at the Women in Military Service for America Memorial in Arlington, Virginia. In 1997, Wilson interned on Gil Noble's television show, 'Like It Is,' at WABC-TV in New York City. In this capacity, he helped cover the assault of Abner Louima and the death of Betty Shabazz. He also met Congressman Charles B. Rangel, comedian Nipsey Russell, political leader Percy Sutton and scholar Yosef ben-Jochannan.

Video Oral History Interview with David A. Wilson, Section A2014_063_001_004, TRT: 4:30:35 ?

David Wilson completed a summer internship at WAFF-TV in Huntsville, Alabama in 1999. The following fall, he began working as a production secretary for '48 Hours' on CBS. He graduated from Rowan University in December, having completed his final semester by taking evening classes at the campus in Camden, New Jersey while working at CBS in New York City during the day. Wilson experienced pervasive racism at CBS, and left the company in 2001 to join 'The Ananda Lewis Show.' He quickly became frustrated with the producers' poor treatment of teenage mother Kelli Moyer, and their aggressive tactics following the attacks of September 11, 2001. He left the show and met Dan Woolsey, with whom he worked on a variety of small projects. During this time, Wilson began researching his family history, and learned of a man in North Carolina named David Wilson, whose family had enslaved Wilson's ancestors. Their meeting was the starting point for the documentary 'Meeting

David Wilson.’

Video Oral History Interview with David A. Wilson, Section A2014_063_001_005, TRT: 5:31:42 ?

David Wilson left his job at Network News Service, LLC to create the documentary ‘Meeting David Wilson.’ He wrote and codirected the film with Daniel Woolsey, and high school classmate Barion Grant served as the producer. The film was completed in 2007, and Wilson negotiated the sale of the film to NBC with help from Byron Lewis. ‘Meeting David Wilson’ aired on MSNBC in April of 2008, and was followed by a town hall discussion facilitated by Brian Williams at Howard University. There, Wilson met NBC News President Steve Capus, and proposed launching a black news website with the resources of NBC. However, the network declined due to problems created by the 2008 financial crash. Instead, Wilson worked with Woolsey and Grant to secure funding from private investors and the Ford Foundation, and launched TheGrio.com in June of 2008. The website was promoted by Reverend Al Sharpton, and Wilson was invited to visit the White House. In 2010, NBC purchased the site, and installed Yvette Miley as executive editor.

Video Oral History Interview with David A. Wilson, Section A2014_063_001_006, TRT: 6:22:07 ?

David Wilson was in the process of negotiating with NBC to reacquire TheGrio at the time of the interview. At this point, he reflects upon the involvement of African Americans in the field of digital entrepreneurship. He also describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community. Wilson concludes the interview by reflecting upon the legacies of TheGrio, his generation and his own work.