

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Richard X. Clark

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Clark, Richard X.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Richard X. Clark,
Dates:	August 12, 2014
Bulk Dates:	2014
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:48:04).
Abstract:	Civil rights activist and author Richard X. Clark (1946 - 2015) was one of the inmate leaders of the 1971 Attica Prison riot. He was also the author of The Brothers of Attica. Clark was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 12, 2014, in Greensboro, North Carolina. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2014_182
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civil rights activist and author Richard X. Clark was born on July 29, 1946 in New York City. He was raised in foster homes in the New York neighborhoods of Jamaica, Queens, and the Bronx. Clark graduated from DeWitt Clinton High School and enlisted in the United States Navy, where he served until 1968.

In 1969, Clark was arrested on charges of attempted robbery and was sentenced to four years in prison. From 1969 to 1972, he served time at multiple state prisons including Sing Sing Correctional Facility, Elmira Correctional Facility, Auburn Correctional Facility, Wallkill Correctional Facility, and the Attica Correctional

Facility in Attica, New York. Appalled by prison conditions at Attica, Clark became a Muslim minister and became active in black Muslim political groups. In September of 1971, he was one of the leaders of the Attica Prison riot, which took the lives of forty-three men. During the riot, Clark was head of the inmates' internal security and served as a liaison between the inmates of D-yard and the authorities.

After his release in 1972, Clark moved to Greensboro, North Carolina and authored the book, *The Brothers of Attica*, which was published in 1973. Twenty years later, Clark relocated to New York City and became a case manager for Phase Piggy Bank, a Harlem-based organization that provides drug and alcohol rehabilitation.

Clark passed away on September 4, 2015 at the age of 69.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Richard X. Clark was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 12, 2014, in Greensboro, North Carolina, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Civil rights activist and author Richard X. Clark (1946 - 2015) was one of the inmate leaders of the 1971 Attica Prison riot. He was also the author of *The Brothers of Attica*.

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:

Clark, Richard X.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Clark, Richard X.--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Civil Rights Activist

Author

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Richard X. Clark, August 12, 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 Richard X. Clark, Section

Richard X. Clark was born on July 29, 1946 in New York City to Jennie McDowell and Leslie James. McDowell had Clark out of wedlock, and gave him up to the Sheltering Arms Children's Service agency in New York City soon after his birth. Clark never met his biological mother or father. At two years old, he was placed in the foster home of Lucille Stukes and Otis Stukes in the Jamaica neighborhood of Queens, New York. Clark's foster parents were alcoholics who often neglected and abused him. In Queens, Clark attended P.S. 50, although he frequently skipped classes. To escape the abuse at home, Clark ran away several times, but was always caught by the police and returned to the Stukes until a new social worker removed Clark from the household. He was then placed in the home of Mary Nelson and Henry Nelson in the Bronx, New York. As a teenager, Clark heard Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X speak at Temple No. 7 in Harlem, New York City, which inspired him to join the Nation of Islam.

Video Oral History Interview with Richard X. Clark, Section
A2014_182_001_002, TRT: 2:29:21 2014/08/12

Richard X. Clark attended the all-boys DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx, New York while living in the foster home of Mary Nelson and Henry Nelson. Clark flourished in his new environment. While in high school, he became a member of the Nation of Islam and the Fruit of Islam, and attended Temple No. 7 in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City, which was led by Malcolm X and Minister Louis Farrakhan. Following the exile of Malcolm X and the controversy surrounding Elijah Muhammad, Clark left the Nation of Islam, and enlisted in the U.S. Navy Reserve. While at Camp Pendleton in San Diego, California awaiting his deployment to Vietnam, Clark learned that he had impregnated two women that he was dating, so he returned to the Bronx and married one of the women, Celeste Baker Clark. Together, the two had twins Kevin Clark and Keith Clark. Clark failed to return to California for his deployment, and was detained at the U.S. Navy brig in Brooklyn, New York.

Video Oral History Interview with Richard X. Clark, Section
A2014_182_001_003, TRT: 3:28:11 2014/08/12

Richard X. Clark worked with the Judge Advocate General's Corps until he was honorably discharged for leaving his post without official permission. He then worked for the Local 1199 hospital workers' union. In 1969, Clark and several other members of the Nation of Islam were arrested for armed robbery and sentenced to five years in prison. He was first placed at the Sing Sing Correctional Facility in Ossining, New York, where he taught high school equivalency classes. While there, Clark faced discrimination from the guards due to his involvement with the Nation of Islam. Clark was then moved to several different facilities including the Auburn Correctional Facility in Auburn, New York, and Elmira Correctional Facility, Elmira, New York, where he was placed in solitary confinement for leading meetings with other inmates. After a brief stint at Wallkill Correctional Facility in Ulster County, New York, he was sent to the maximum security prison, Attica Correctional Facility, in Attica, New York.

Video Oral History Interview with Richard X. Clark, Section
A2014_182_001_004, TRT: 4:32:17 2014/08/12

Richard X. Clark was incarcerated at Attica Correctional Facility in 1971, where he was assigned to a high security section called the A block due to his affiliation with the Nation of Islam. Conditions at the prison were dismal, especially for Muslim inmates. Many prisoners were assaulted, malnourished and restricted in their reading materials. As an assistant minister in the Nation of Islam, Clark spent his allotted thirty minutes of recreational time leading meetings with other members of the faith, which included the men charged with killing Malcolm X as well as members of the Five Percent Nation. On September 8, 1971, Clark witnessed a confrontation between a guard and two inmates, which magnified the unrest felt among the inmates and the prison's staff. The next morning, Clark and the other inmates were assaulted by guards whom they quickly overtook and disarmed. Clark then proceeded to D block to join more prisoners in a revolt, and ensured the safety of several civilian personnel along the way.

Video Oral History Interview with Richard X. Clark, Section
A2014_182_001_005, TRT: 5:29:23 2014/08/12

Richard X. Clark joined his fellow Nation of Islam inmates in the D block of the Attica Correctional Facility in Attica, New York during the riot of 1971. Through a vote, Clark was selected to represent his block during the negotiations with the prison staff. The prisoners then compiled a list of thirty-two demands. As the liaison between the rioters and the outside staff and political leaders, Clark ensured the safety of the civilian personnel inside the prison. During negotiations, several notable figures entered the prison including Assemblyman Arthur Eve, lawyer William Kunstler and activist Bobby Seale. Four days into the riot, Clark and his fellow inmates thought that negotiations were moving forward, but the death of one of the prison guards prompted the National Guard and state troopers to enter the prison by force. They began firing into the yard and inside the prison. After regaining control of the prison, guards forced Clark into solitary confinement, where he served out the rest of his sentence.

Video Oral History Interview with Richard X. Clark, Section
A2014_182_001_006, TRT: 6:18:14 2014/08/12

Richard X. Clark's attorneys notified him of the forty-three casualties from the 1971 Attica Correctional Facility riot in Attica, New York. At this point, Clark talks about those who were killed and the circumstances surrounding their deaths. Clark was released from prison in February of 1972, and one month later, his wife, Celeste Baker Clark, died from a brain tumor. While raising his sons, Kevin Clark and Keith Clark, Clark worked for the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration in Greensboro, North Carolina until he was indicted in 1975 for his role in the riot. The charges were later dropped, and Clark and his fellow inmates filed a lawsuit against the State of New York for the abuse they endured while incarcerated. The case was eventually settled, and the detainees received compensation. Clark went on to work at Phase Piggy Back, Inc. in New York City. He describes his concerns for the African American community; and reflects upon his legacy and how he would like to be remembered.

