Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com

Creator: Clarke, Caroline V.

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Caroline Clarke,

Dates: September 9, 2014

Bulk Dates: 2014

Physical Description: 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:22:59).

Abstract: Journalist Caroline Clarke (1964 - ) was the executive editor of Black Enterprise and host of the Black Enterprise Business Report. Her books included Take a Lesson and Postcards from Cookie. Clarke was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 9, 2014, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

Identification: A2014_250

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Journalist Caroline V. Clarke was born on Christmas Day, 1964 in New York City. As an infant, she was adopted and then raised in the Bronx, New York. Clarke later discovered that her biological mother was Carole "Cookie" Cole, the daughter of the famous musician Nat King Cole. She received her B.A. degree in English from Smith College, and then earned her M.S. degree with honors in journalism from Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism. She also studied at Spelman College from 1983 to 1984.

In 1987, Clarke was hired as a reporter for the North Jersey Herald-News. She
then joined the Connecticut Law Tribune in 1988, and became a staff writer for American Lawyer in 1989, where she was a contributing winner of a National Magazine Award for Outstanding Single Topic Issue. Then, in 1993, Black Enterprise magazine hired Clark as a senior editor. In 1998, she helped launch Black Enterprise Books, and served as its editorial director until 2003. During this time, she was promoted to editor-at-large of Black Enterprise magazine, and, in 2009, became Black Enterprise’s general manager of interactive media. In 2010, Clarke was named executive editor of Black Enterprise and became host of Black Enterprise Business Report. She also serves as editorial director of Black Enterprise’s Women of Power Summit, the nation's largest annual conference for African American women executives.

In 2001, Clarke, through Black Enterprise Books, published her first book, *Take a Lesson: Today’s Black Achievers on How They Made It and What They Learned along the Way*. She also authored *Postcards from Cookie: A Memoir of Motherhood, Miracles and a Whole Lot of Mail*, which was published in 2014.

Clarke has served on the boards of Spence Chapin Family Services and the BE BRIDGE Foundation. She is married and has two children.

Caroline Clarke was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on September 9, 2014.

---

**Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Caroline Clarke was conducted by Harriette Cole on September 9, 2014, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Journalist Caroline Clarke (1964 - ) was the executive editor of Black Enterprise and host of the Black Enterprise Business Report. Her books included Take a Lesson and Postcards from Cookie.

---

**Restrictions**

**Restrictions on Access**

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

**Restrictions on Use**
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:

Clarke, Caroline V.

Cole, Harriette (Interviewer)

Feldman, Isaac (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Clarke, Caroline V.--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 Caroline Clarke, September 9, 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.
Caroline Clarke was born on December 25, 1964 in New York City to Carole Cole. Clarke’s birth mother was the adopted daughter of Maria Hawkins Cole and Nat King Cole. During her pregnancy, she was sent to New York to give birth in secret in order to protect her father’s reputation. Clarke was then adopted by Vera Clarke and Robert Clarke. Her adoptive mother was born in New York City’s Harlem neighborhood to Grenadian immigrant parents, and later attended the City College of New York. Clarke’s adoptive father was also born in New York City to West Indian immigrants from Barbados. He met his wife at the City College of New York, and later served in the U.S. Army during World War II. Upon his return, he finished his graduate degree and married Clarke’s adoptive mother. After her adoption, Clarke moved with her family to Monrovia, Liberia, where her adoptive father taught chemistry at the University of Liberia.

Caroline Clarke’s biological grandmother, Carol Hawkins Lane, was the youngest child of Mingo Hawkins and Caro Saunders Hawkins, who died in childbirth. At that time, Clarke’s grandmother was sent to live with her aunt, Charlotte Hawkins Brown, who founded the Alice Freeman Palmer Memorial Institute in Sedalia, North Carolina. Clarke’s grandmother also died at an early age, and Clarke’s mother, Carole Cole, was adopted by her aunt and uncle, Maria Hawkins Cole and the famous jazz musician Nat King Cole. Clarke’s mother was unmarried when she became pregnant, and was forced to give Clarke up for adoption. Clarke was raised by Vera Clarke and Robert Clarke in the Wakefield section of the Bronx, New York, which was a predominantly West Indian neighborhood. She began her education at P.S. 121, Throop School, where she excelled in her classes and
Throop School, where she excelled in her classes and skipped the third grade. Clarke went on to attend J.H.S. 144, Michelangelo School and The Bronx High School of Science.

Video Oral History Interview with Caroline Clarke, Section A2014_250_001_003, TRT: 3:30:18 2014/09/09

Caroline Clarke graduated from The Bronx High School of Science in Bronx, New York. She initially aspired to become an obstetrician, but after learning about the demands of the profession and her female cousin’s difficult experiences in medical school, she decided to pursue an English degree instead. Clarke attended the predominantly white Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, where she was the only African American student who lived in the Albright House dormitory. During her college years, Clarke met Timolin Cole, who was a student at the neighboring Amherst College, and discovered that Cole was the daughter of her birth mother’s aunt and uncle, Maria Hawkins Cole and Nat King Cole. Clark went on to learn more about her biological family, including that her biological father was a white man from Long Island named Stanley Goldberg. At this point in the interview, Clarke reflects upon her racial identity, and describes her children’s perspective on their mixed race heritage.

Video Oral History Interview with Caroline Clarke, Section A2014_250_001_004, TRT: 4:30:21 2014/09/09

Caroline Clarke spent her junior year at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, and then completed her bachelor’s degree at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. After receiving her degree, she was accepted to attend the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in New York City. Clarke graduated with honors, and was recruited to join The North Jersey Herald and News. Shortly afterwards, she was hired by the Connecticut Law Tribune, where she was eventually promoted to a position at the company’s flagship publication, The American Lawyer. During this period, Clarke married John C. Graves. She then began working for Black Enterprise magazine, which was owned by her husband’s father, Earl G. Graves, Sr. At Black Enterprise, Clarke helped coordinate networking opportunities like the Sisters, Inc.
conference and the Black Enterprise Entrepreneurs Summit. She began receiving requests for a conference dedicated to black women entrepreneurs, and went on to found the Women of Power Summit.

Video Oral History Interview with Caroline Clarke, Section A2014_250_001_005, TRT: 5:25:17 2014/09/09

Caroline Clarke served as a senior editor and editor-at-large of Black Enterprise magazine for over twenty years. In 2010, she was promoted to executive editor and became the host of the ‘Black Enterprise Business Report,’ a weekly television program produced by Black Enterprise, Inc. Clarke also authored two books: ‘Take a Lesson: Today's Black Achievers on How They Made It and What They Learned Along the Way,’ which featured oral histories from twenty successful African Americans; and ‘Postcards from Cookie: A Memoir of Motherhood, Miracles and a Whole Lot of Mail,’ which detailed her life story. At this point, Clarke reflects upon her legacy and the state of journalism. She concludes the interview by sharing a message to future generations.