

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Khalil Gibran Muhammad

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Muhammad, Khalil Gibran, 1972-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Khalil Gibran Muhammad,
Dates:	September 1, 2016
Bulk Dates:	2016
Physical Description:	9 uncompressed MOV digital video files (4:24:30).
Abstract:	Historian Khalil Gibran Muhammad (1972 -) was the director emeritus of Harlem's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and the author of <i>The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America</i> . Muhammad was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 1, 2016, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2016_011
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Historian Khalil Gibran Muhammad was born on April 27, 1972 in Chicago, Illinois to Ozier Muhammad and Kimberly Muhammad-Earl. He completed his B.A. degree in economics at the University of Pennsylvania in 1993, and his Ph.D. degree in history at Rutgers University in 2004.

Initially intending to work in finance, Muhammad worked at Deloitte-Touche for almost two years before beginning his Ph.D. work in history. Following his graduation from Rutgers University in 2004, Muhammad worked as an Andrew

W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at the Vera Institute of Justice for two years. He then joined the faculty of Indiana University in Bloomington as an associate professor of history, where he taught for five years, focusing his teaching and research on the ideas of black criminality following the American Civil War. In 2011, Muhammad was selected as the next director of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem. While there, Muhammad sought to expand the center's outreach and funding, focusing particularly on programming to attract younger audiences. In late 2015, Muhammad announced he was leaving the Schomburg Center to join the faculty of Harvard's Kennedy School as professor of history, race, and public policy. He was also hired as the Suzanne Young Murray Professor at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study.

Muhammad released *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* in 2010, which was awarded the John Hope Franklin Publication Prize from the American Studies Association in 2011. Since its publication, he is a frequent contributor on the topic, including an interview with Bill Moyers in 2012 and 2016. Muhammad also delivered lectures at the City University of New York, Rutgers University, Indiana University, and many others. Muhammad's commentary on the racial past of the United States and contemporary policing and criminality was published in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, National Public Radio and others. While under his direction in 2015, the Schomburg Center won the National Medal for Museum and Library Service. Muhammad and his wife, Stephanie Lawson-Muhammad, have three children: Gibran Mikkell, Jordan Grace, and Justice Marie.

Khalil Gibran Muhammad was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on September 1, 2016.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Khalil Gibran Muhammad was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on September 1, 2016, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 9 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Historian Khalil Gibran Muhammad (1972 -) was the director emeritus of Harlem's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and the author of *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America*.

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:

Muhammad, Khalil Gibran, 1972-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Muhammad, Khalil Gibran, 1972---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Historian

Library Administrator

HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

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 Khalil Gibran Muhammad, September 1, 2016. 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 Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Section A2016_011_001_001, TRT: 1:28:58 2016/09/01

Khalil Gibran Muhammad was born April 27, 1972 in Chicago, Illinois to Kimberly Muhammad-Earl and Ozier Muhammad. His mother was a descendent of Confederate soldier Robert Henry, who had several children with Betty Wharf, an African American slave. While most of her children passed as white after emancipation, Muhammad's great-grandfather, Henry Gavin, did not. Years later, Muhammad's mother was orphaned as a young girl; and was raised by her grandparents, Laura Gavin and Eugene Gavin. At nineteen years old, she married Muhammad's father, photojournalist Ozier Muhammad, who was the grandson of Nation of Islam founder Elijah Muhammad. Muhammad's father often conflicted with his own father, Nathaniel Muhammad; and followed his uncle, Warith Deen Muhammad, in the Nation of Islam schism. Muhammad's mother began her career as a teacher in the Chicago Public Schools, and eventually became an administrator. She raised Muhammad in Chicago, after divorcing his father when he was two years old.

Video Oral History Interview with Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Section A2016_011_001_002, TRT: 2:29:23 2016/09/01

Khalil Gibran Muhammad's parents, Kimberly Muhammad-Earl and Ozier Muhammad, met in the Chatham neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois. They separated when Muhammad was young, but maintained a good relationship. Muhammad was raised by his mother

on Chicago's South Side, and visited his father's North Side apartment on the weekends. Both of his parents enjoyed music, with his mother listening to R&B; while his father preferred jazz, and took him to concerts and Broadway shows. Muhammad's paternal aunt, Ella Muhammad, often cared for him while his mother worked. He also visited his paternal grandmother, Eleanor Paschal Muhammad, who lived across the street from Dixon Elementary School, where he was a student. Muhammad followed some of the tenets of the Nation of Islam, including the ban on pork, despite his father's frustrations with the hypocrisy he saw among the church leaders. Muhammad became a Christian during college, and attended Bishop Arthur Brazier's Apostolic Church of God as an adult.

Video Oral History Interview with Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Section A2016_011_001_003, TRT: 3:32:33 2016/09/01

Khalil Gibran Muhammad began his education one year early at Arthur Dixon Elementary School in Chicago, Illinois. During the seventh grade, Muhammad enrolled in an advanced program at Morgan Park High School, where he later won a speech contest. After moving with his mother to Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood, Muhammad attended Kenwood Academy High School; and was encouraged academically by his best friend's father, Ralph A. Austen, who was a history professor at the University of Chicago. In addition to his schooling, Muhammad played tennis and worked odd jobs throughout his childhood. When he was twelve years old, he and a friend were hired to work at the newly opened Hyde Park Computers store. Muhammad remained an employee of the store until graduating high school; and, by that time, had become a salesman and learned to do repairs. He and his mother lived in the Regents Park apartment building in Hyde Park, where he met celebrities like actor Robert Earl Jones.

Video Oral History Interview with Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Section A2016_011_001_004, TRT: 4:31:18 2016/09/01

Khalil Gibran Muhammad grew up in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois in the 1980s, during a time of increasing opportunities for African Americans.

With his father, Ozier Muhammad, Muhammad visited New York City's Studio Museum of Harlem and Chicago's South Shore Cultural Center, and had conversations about current events and literature. Upon graduating from Kenwood Academy High School, Muhammad was recruited to attend the University of Pennsylvania, where he matriculated in 1989. There, he majored in economics, and joined the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity. At the time, the university was embroiled in a free speech debate, after a lawsuit was filed against a white student who directed racially charged insults at a group of black students. During Muhammad's senior year, he protested a student newspaper that had published a series of racist articles by taking all of the copies, and was detained by a campus security officer. He also recalls the cultural differences between Chicago and the East Coast.

Video Oral History Interview with Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Section A2016_011_001_005, TRT: 5:31:52 2016/09/01

Khalil Gibran Muhammad was nearly prevented from graduating from the University of Pennsylvania due to his protest activities, but obtained his degree with assistance from African American administrator Harold Haskins. Soon after, he attended an arbitration meeting for the officer who assaulted him during the protest. Muhammad then began working at the Deloitte and Touche accounting firm in New York City. He quickly decided to pursue an academic career; and, while applying to graduate programs in history, transferred to an office in his hometown of Chicago, Illinois. Hoping to work with historian David Levering Lewis, Muhammad decided to attend Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. He matriculated in 1995; and, during his studies, was influenced to study black criminality by historian Roger Lane and the trial of O.J. Simpson. His dissertation focused on the experiences of African American criminals in the North. Muhammad graduated in 2003, and was hired at Indiana University.

Video Oral History Interview with Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Section A2016_011_001_006, TRT: 6:31:01 2016/09/01

Khalil Gibran Muhammad studied black criminality while earning a Ph.D. degree at Rutgers University, as well as

during his post-doctoral fellowship at the Vera Institute of Justice in New York City. While Muhammad worked on his dissertation, his son, Gibran Muhammad, was born in 2000; and his first daughter, Jordan Muhammad, was born in 2002. His second daughter, Justice Muhammad, was born during his first year as a professor at Indiana University in Bloomington. There, Muhammad's family joined a small African American community, and became active at the Bethel A.M.E. Church. He received special attention from the university's history faculty, as two black professors had recently left the department after experiencing discrimination in Bloomington. In 2010, Muhammad published his study of racial discrimination in the justice system, 'The Condemnation of Blackness,' to critical acclaim. That year, he began interviewing for the directorship of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City.

Video Oral History Interview with Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Section A2016_011_001_007, TRT: 7:30:55 2016/09/01

Khalil Gibran Muhammad applied in 2010 for the directorship of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City. He was called to be interviewed by scholar Henry Louis "Skip" Gates, attorney Gordon J. Davis investment banker Raymond J. McGuire; but did not expect to be hired due to his young age. In November of 2010, publicist Terrie Williams announced that Muhammad would assume the directorship. In contrast to his predecessor, Howard Dodson, Muhammad instituted a decentralized style of management at the center. He gave more power to senior administrators like librarian Diana Lachatanere, and facilitated collaboration between the center's divisions. Muhammad also took over the renovations to the center, which were ongoing at the time of his appointment. During this period, Muhammad connected with other young black men who were recently appointed to head major African American institutions, including Robert Battle at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and Benjamin Jealous at the NAACP.

Video Oral History Interview with Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Section A2016_011_001_008, TRT: 8:32:32 2016/09/01

Khalil Gibran Muhammad worked closely with New York City's black community, including in Harlem, while serving as the director of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. He expanded the center's programming, and attracted a younger audience with events like a conversation between authors Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Zadie Smith. Muhammad also hired new staff members, and promoted longtime employees, including director of operations Kena Mayberry. While Muhammad's decentralized management style differed from his predecessor, Howard Dodson, he nevertheless became Muhammad's mentor and friend. Prior to Muhammad's appointment as director, he had informed the search committee that he would not remain at the center for longer than ten years; and, after five years, he decided to resign his post at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. He reflects upon his tenure as director, and talks about the center's history and the need to expand its facilities.

Video Oral History Interview with Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Section A2016_011_001_009, TRT: 9:15:58 2016/09/01

Khalil Gibran Muhammad joined the John F. Kennedy School of Government in Cambridge, Massachusetts as a tenured professor of history, race and public policy in 2017. Muhammad talks about his role as an activist scholar; and his membership on the advisory board for Cure Violence, an organization focused on preventing deaths from violence in urban neighborhoods. He also reflects upon his legacy, and concludes the interview by describing his hopes for the African American community.