

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Michael Lomax

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Lomax, Michael, 1947-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Michael Lomax,
Dates:	January 31, 2017
Bulk Dates:	2017
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:59:15).
Abstract:	Nonprofit executive Michael Lomax (1947-) was the first African American chairman of the Fulton County Board of Commissioners, served as president of Dillard University from 1997 to 2004, and became president of the United Negro College Fund in 2004. Lomax was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 31, 2017, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2017_013
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Nonprofit executive Michael Lomax was born on October 2, 1947, in Los Angeles, California to parents Hallie Alemena Davis and Lucius W. Lomax, Jr. He moved to Tuskegee, Alabama in 1961, where he attended Tuskegee Institute High School. He earned his B.A. degree in English from Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1968, his M.A. degree in English literature from Columbia University in New York in 1972, and his Ph.D. degree in African American studies from Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia in 1984.

After graduation, Lomax began teaching English at Morehouse College. In 1974, he was hired as the director of research and special assistant to the mayor of Atlanta. While in this position, Lomax helped establish the City of Atlanta's Office of Cultural Affairs, where he served as director. In 1978, Lomax was elected to the Fulton County Board of Commissioners. Two years later, he became the first African American to be elected as board chairman, a position he held for twelve years. In 1981, Lomax began working as a professor of English at Spelman College in Atlanta. He served as the president of The National Faculty in Atlanta from 1994 to 1997. From 1997 to 2004, he served as president and professor of English and African world studies at Dillard University in New Orleans, Louisiana. Lomax then began serving as the president and chief executive officer of the United Negro College Fund in Washington, D.C.

Lomax has served on the board for Teach for America and the KIPP Foundation, as well as the Carter Center, the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, and the Studio Museum of Harlem. He was a member of the founding Council of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture. He also founded the National Black Arts Festival in 1978. Lomax served on the President's Board of Advisors on Historically Black Colleges and Universities under President George W. Bush. He has received several awards as well, including the Emory Medal and several honorary degrees.

Lomax and his wife, Cheryl, have two daughters, Michele and Rachel.

Michael Lomax was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 31, 2017.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Michael Lomax was conducted by Larry Crowe on January 31, 2017, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Nonprofit executive Michael Lomax (1947-) was the first African American chairman of the Fulton County Board of Commissioners, served as president of Dillard University from 1997 to 2004, and became president of the United Negro College Fund in 2004.

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:

Lomax, Michael, 1947-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Lomax, Michael, 1947- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Nonprofit Executive

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 Michael Lomax, January 31, 2017. 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 Michael Lomax, Section A2017_013_001_001, TRT: 1:31:54
2017/01/31

Michael Lomax was born on October 2, 1947 in Los Angeles, California to

Almena Lomax and Lucius Lomax. His paternal great-grandfather, Francis Deignan, Jr., was the Irish owner of a shipbuilding company in Charleston, South Carolina. He married Elizabeth Ann Poyas Deignan, a free woman of color who was descended from a white plantation owner. Their daughter, Minnie Deignan Lomax, graduated from Fisk University, and married businessman Lucius Lomax, Jr. in Houston, Texas. Lomax's father was born in Brenham, Texas, and attended the University of Illinois in Chicago. Later, his family moved to Los Angeles, where Lomax's paternal grandfather ran a numbers bank. Lomax's maternal great-grandfather, Dewood Davis, was a longshoreman in Galveston, Texas. Many years later, Lomax's mother and her family moved to Los Angeles, where she studied journalism at Los Angeles City College. She also met and married Lomax's father, who managed the Dunbar Cocktail Lounge and Grill on Central Avenue.

Video Oral History Interview with Michael Lomax, Section A2017_013_001_002, TRT: 2:31:36
2017/01/31

Michael Lomax's mother, Almena Lomax, worked as a journalist under Charlotta Bass at the California Eagle in Los Angeles, California. With Lomax's father, Lucius Lomax, she went on to acquire the Los Angeles Tribune, whose readership included William Faulkner and W.E.B. Du Bois. In 1956, Lomax's mother raised the money to fly to Montgomery, Alabama, where she interviewed Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ralph Abernathy, and became a dedicated supporter of the Civil Rights Movement. Lomax and his five siblings were raised in Los Angeles, where they initially lived in a diverse community in Jefferson Park. They later moving to a larger house on 6th Avenue. Lomax's parents had an active social life, and hosted guests like Dr. King and the novelist John Oliver Killens. During the height of the McCarthy era, Lomax attended a leftist integrated day camp, where he was entertained by celebrities like Harry Belafonte and George Reeves.

Video Oral History Interview with Michael Lomax, Section A2017_013_001_003, TRT: 3:27:43
2017/01/31

Michael Lomax grew up in a diverse community in Los Angeles, California, where his neighbors included Marilyn McCoo and Nichelle Nichols. He excelled in his literature and history coursework at Arlington Heights Elementary School and Mount Vernon Junior High School. Around this time, Lomax's parents, Almena Lomax and Lucius Lomax, divorced. His father transferred ownership of the Los Angeles Tribune to Lomax's mother, who eventually closed the newspaper to focus on covering the Civil Rights Movement in the South. In 1961, Lomax moved with his mother and siblings to Tuskegee, Alabama, where he became a student at Tuskegee Institute High School. That summer, his paternal grandfather, Lucius Lomax, Jr., passed away, and Lomax and his family returned to Los Angeles. In 1964, his mother went back to the South to cover the Freedom Summer, and Lomax left high school to enroll at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia at the age of sixteen years old.

Video Oral History Interview with Michael Lomax, Section A2017_013_001_004, TRT: 4:28:57
2017/01/31

Michael Lomax enrolled at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia in 1964, during the tenure of President Benjamin Mays. He majored in English, and took courses at the nearby Spelman College and Atlanta University. He played the role of the Governor in a college production of 'The Blacks: A Clown Show' during his sophomore year. He also attended chapel services at Sale Hall, and was inducted into the Phi Beta Kappa Society. One month before Lomax's graduation, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis,

Tennessee. During the funeral at Spelman College's Sisters Chapel, Lomax escorted guests like Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee to the casket. Upon graduating in 1968, Lomax enrolled in a one-year English master's program at Columbia University in New York City. He met his future wife, the poet and playwright Pearl Cleage, during the subsequent summer. With Cleage, Lomax returned to Atlanta, where he was hired as an English instructor at Morehouse College.

Video Oral History Interview with Michael Lomax, Section A2017_013_001_005, TRT: 5:29:41
2017/01/31

Michael Lomax and his future wife, Pearl Cleage, moved to Atlanta, Georgia during the summer of 1969. There, Lomax worked as an English instructor at Morehouse College, while Cleage completed her bachelor's degree at Spelman College. At this point in the interview, Lomax talks about the Black Power and Black Arts Movements. He went on to pursue a Ph.D. degree in English at Emory University, where he wrote his dissertation on Countee Cullen and the Harlem Renaissance. In 1973, Lomax was encouraged by his friend, David Franklin, to volunteer as a researcher and writer for Maynard Jackson's mayoral campaign. Lomax went on to direct Mayor Jackson's Office of Cultural Affairs. In this role, Lomax oversaw the development of the Atlanta Cyclorama and Civil War Museum, as well as improvements to the city's library system. In 1978, Lomax joined the Fulton County Board of Commissioners, where he was instrumental in expanding the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority and Georgia State Route 400.

Video Oral History Interview with Michael Lomax, Section A2017_013_001_006, TRT: 6:29:24
2017/01/31

Michael Lomax directed the Office of Cultural Affairs in Atlanta, Georgia under Mayor Maynard Jackson from 1975 to 1978. In this position, Lomax worked with members of the consular corps and heads of state like the Senegalese President Leopold Sedar Senghor. Lomax also helped diversify the City of Atlanta's arts programs by creating opportunities for black organizations like the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. At this point in the interview, Lomax talks about the expansion of the William B. Hartsfield Atlanta International Airport. In 1987, Lomax used his position as chairman of the Fulton County Board of Commissioners to create Atlanta's National Black Arts Festival. The next year, he was instrumental in the city's successful bid to host the Democratic National Convention, where Michael Dukakis was nominated. After an unsuccessful mayoral campaign against Bill Campbell, Lomax decided to apply for the presidency of Dillard University in New Orleans, Louisiana.