Overview of the Collection

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

**Creator:** Walker, Tristan, 1984-

**Title:** The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Tristan Walker,

**Dates:** November 29, 2017

**Bulk Dates:** 2017

**Physical Description:** 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:21:49).

**Abstract:** Entrepreneur Tristan Walker (1984-) was the founder and chairman of CODE2040, and founder and CEO of Walker & Company Brands. Walker was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 29, 2017, in Palo Alto, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

**Identification:** A2017_209

**Language:** The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Entrepreneur Tristan Walker was born on July 5, 1984 in Queens, New York to Bettie Walker Harris and Roger Vassar. Walker attended Cadwallader Colden School and J.H.S. 185, Edward Bleeker School in Queens. Walker then received a full scholarship to attend the Hotchkiss School in Lakeville, Connecticut. Upon graduating in 2002, Walker went on to obtain his B.A. degree in economics from Stony Brook University in Stony Brook, New York in 2005. He then earned his M.B.A. degree from the Stanford Graduate School of Business in Stanford, California in 2010.
Walker started his internship at Lehman Brothers, Inc. in New York City in 2005, where he eventually accepted a full-time position as an analyst and trader and served until 2007. Walker was then hired to work for JPMorgan Chase and Co. as an analyst and trader, and served in that position until 2008. During graduate school, Walker also held internships at the Boston Consulting Group and Twitter, Inc. In 2009, Walker accepted the director of business development position at the startup company, Foursquare Labs, Inc. In 2012, Walker founded the non-profit organization CODE2040, to promote diversity in the technology industry. After leaving Foursquare Labs, Inc. in 2012, Walker worked as an entrepreneur-in-residence at the venture capital firm of Andreessen Horowitz, located in Menlo Park, California. In 2013, Walker founded and served as CEO of Walker and Company Brands, Inc., an African American health and beauty products company. Walker and Company Brands, Inc.’s products included the Bevel shaving line for black men, and FORM Beauty, a women’s hair care collection designed for all hair textures launched in 2017.

Walker was named the USA Today Person of the Year in 2014. In the same year, Walker also was featured on Creativity 50 list The Most Creative People of the Year. In 2017, Walker was later featured on Fortune Magazine’s ’40 under 40’ list, Ebony magazine’s ‘100 Most Powerful People’ list and the Hollywood Reporter’s ‘Digital Power 50’ list.

Tristan Walker and his wife, Amoy Toyloy Walker, have one son, Avery Walker.

Tristan Walker was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on November 29, 2017.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Tristan Walker was conducted by Harriette Cole on November 29, 2017, in Palo Alto, California, and was recorded on 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Entrepreneur Tristan Walker (1984 - ) was the founder and chairman of CODE2040, and founder and CEO of Walker & Company Brands.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The
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:

Walker, Tristan, 1984-
Cole, Harriette (Interviewer)
Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Walker, Tristan, 1984---Interviews

Organizations:
Occupations:

Entrepreneur

HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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


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).
Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage


Tristan Walker was born on July 5, 1984 in Queens, New York to Bettie Walker Harris and Roger Vassar. His maternal grandmother, Hattie Walker, lived in Aliceville, Alabama, where Walker’s mother was born. At eighteen years old, she moved to New York City, where she had three children, of whom Walker was the youngest. To support the family, his mother worked full-time at the New York City Housing Authority, and held part-time positions at Time Warner, Inc. and Caldor, Inc. Walker’s father was murdered when he was three years old, and his older brother, Sean McMillon, became his male role model. During his early childhood, Walker lived in the South Jamaica Houses in Queens, where he was rarely allowed to leave his family’s apartment. When he was six years old, his family moved to a high rise in Queens’ Flushing neighborhood. There, Walker attended the Cadwallader Colden School and J.H.S. 185, Edward Bleeker School. After class, he participated in sports and mentoring programs at the Boys’ Club of New York.


Tristan Walker grew up in the projects of Queens, New York, where he was active at the Boys’ Club of New York. There, Walker’s mentors noticed his academic talents, and helped him obtain a full scholarship to attend the predominantly white and wealthy Hotchkiss School in Lakeville, Connecticut. After enrolling in 1998, Walker was exposed to subjects like philosophy and calculus for the first time, and made the honor roll every semester. He primarily socialized with the students of color. At this
primarily socialized with the students of color. At this point, Walker remembers contacting his mother, who worked in Manhattan, during the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Aspiring to pursue a career on Wall Street, Walker studied economics at Stony Brook University in New York. He interned with Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc., where he later secured a full-time position. During his final semester, he worked at the Lehman Brothers office in London, England. While there, he developed a relationship with his future wife, Amoy Toyloy Walker, via Facebook.

Video Oral History Interview with Tristan Walker, Section A2017_209_001_003, TRT: 3:29:42 2017/11/29

Tristan Walker befriended his wife, Amoy Toyloy Walker, via Facebook in 2005, and proposed to her the following year. He also accepted a trading position at Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc., where he joined a new team that focused on the volatility of energy prices after Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita. After eighteen months, Walker became a trader at JPMorgan Chase and Co., but was terminated during the corporate restructuring in 2008. That same year, Walker was admitted to the Stanford Graduate School of Business. He received a grant from the Boston Consulting Group, and briefly interned with them during the summer. Interested in new media platforms, Walker also worked on the initial monetization of Twitter, Inc. during his first year of business school, and went on to become the head of business development for Foursquare Labs, Inc. At this point, Walker describes the business courses that were useful for his career, and talks about the importance of soft skills for CEOs.

Video Oral History Interview with Tristan Walker, Section A2017_209_001_004, TRT: 4:30:06 2017/11/29

Tristan Walker was a student at the Stanford Graduate School of Business when he joined the staff of Foursquare Labs, Inc. As the company’s head of business development, he recruited brands and local vendors to monetize the Foursquare application, which officially launched at South by Southwest in 2009. Three years later, Walker secured a nine-month entrepreneurial residence from Andreessen Horowitz, which he used to develop Walker and Company Brands, Inc. The company focused
on creating hair products for people of color, and was supported by investments from prominent African Americans like John Legend, Magic Johnson, Nas and Gentleman Ryan Leslie. In subsequent years, Walker developed the Bevel brand of men’s shaving products, and the Form Beauty brand of women’s hair products. At this point, Walker talks about his experiences with shaving during his youth and as a young professional. He also described the history of shaving technology, and his company’s product development and marketing strategies.

Video Oral History Interview with Tristan Walker, Section A2017_209_001_005, TRT: 5:24:04 2017/11/29

Tristan Walker founded Walker and Company Brands, Inc. in 2013. Through the company, he developed men’s shaving products under the Bevel brand, which was available internationally on Amazon.com. Walker also founded the nonprofit organization Code2040 to prepare youth of color to enter the technology industry. At this point in the interview, Walker describes his plan for the future of Walker and Company Brands, Inc., and talks about his corporate values. He reflects upon his life and his advice to young black men, and describes his hopes for the African American community.