

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Frank Mercado-Valdes

PERSON

Mercado-Valdes, Frank, 1962-

Alternative Names: Frank Mercado-Valdes;

Life Dates: May 18, 1962-

Place of Birth: New York, New York, USA

Residence: New York, NY

Occupations: Television Executive

Biographical Note

Broadcast executive Frank Mercado-Valdes was born on May 18, 1962 in New York City to Frank Mercado and Linda Valdes. At the age of fifteen, Mercado-Valdes became the Florida Junior Olympic boxing champion, and won the state's Golden Gloves Lightweight Championship in 1979. He graduated from Coral Gables Senior High School in 1980, and received his A.A. degree in political science from Miami-Dade Community College in 1983. Mercado-Valdes went on to earn his B.S. degree in political science from the University of Miami in 1985.

In 1985, Mercado-Valdes founded the first Miss Collegiate Black American Pageant, held at the Miami Marine Stadium. He was then hired as the media coordinator for the 1988 Bush-Quayle presidential campaign. In 1990, he secured a deal with Universal Studios to televise the Miss Collegiate Black America Pageant. He also launched the African Heritage Network, a television syndication and production company, which bought the syndication rights to films like *Cotton Comes to Harlem*, *Porgy and Bess*, and *Shaft*. In 1993, The African Heritage Network introduced the "Movie of the Month" series, hosted by actors Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee. Mercado-Valdes went on to serve as an executive producer of *Stomp!*, a nationally televised stepping competition and performance program. In 1994, The African Heritage Network served as an executive producer for *A Tribute to Alex Haley*, a program highlighting the accomplishments of the *Roots* author. In 1996, Mercado-Valdes secured the weekend syndication rights of the popular police drama *New York Undercover*, making The African Heritage Network the first minority-owned company to purchase a major network series for syndication. In 1997, Mercado-Valdes also purchased the rights to Kensington Publishing Group's *Arabesque Books*, the first and only African American romance book line. In 2002, Mercado-Valdes developed the television shows *The Source: All Access*, based on the popular hip-hop magazine *The Source*, and *N'Gear*, a

behind-the-scenes look at urban fashions, designers, and models. Later that year, The African Heritage Network was renamed to The Heritage Networks, and Mercado-Valdes developed the television program *Livin' Large*, a hip-hop version of *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*. In 2003, Mercado-Valdes secured syndication and production rights for Showtime at the Apollo. He resigned from The Heritage Network in 2004, and served as the chief strategic officer for *Soul of the South* Television from 2011 to 2014. Mercado-Valdes became the managing director of Fair Market Value Consultants and the executive director of San Juan Hill Partners in 2016.

Frank Mercado-Valdes was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on April 30, 2018.

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