

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Rafael Cortada

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Cortada, Rafael L.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Rafael Cortada,
Dates:	June 15, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:41:17).
Abstract:	College president Rafael Cortada (1934 - 2017) has served as president of several community colleges, including the Metropolitan Community College in Minneapolis, Community College of Baltimore, El Camino College, University of the District of Columbia, and Wayne County Community College. Cortada was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 15, 2004, in Finksburg, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_079
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Rafael Leon Cortada, Ph.D, was born on February 12, 1934, in New York City. His mother was a seamstress and his father was a postal worker. He attended Public Schools 99 and 39 until his family moved and enrolled him in a Catholic school. In 1951, Cortada received his high school diploma from St. Francis Xavier Military School in New York.

Shortly after earning his bachelor's of arts degree in philosophy from Fordham University in 1955, he was drafted into the army and stationed in Korea. In 1958, he received his master's degree in secondary education from Columbia University. He went on to further his education earning his Ph.D from Fordham in Latin American and modern European history in 1967.

Cortada taught high school history from 1957-1964 at New Rochelle High School in New York while working on his Ph.D. From 1964 to 1966, he taught Latin American history at the University of Dayton in Ohio. He then went on to work as a Foreign Service officer in the State Department from 1966 to 1969. From 1969 until 1974, Cortada taught at a number of colleges including Federal City College in Washington, D.C., Smith College in Massachusetts, Howard University, Medgar Evers College and Hostos Community College, both in New York.

In 1974, Cortada wrote and published his first and only book, *Black Studies, An Urban Comparative Curriculum*, and received his first job as a college president. From 1974 to 1977, Cortada served as president of Metropolitan Community College in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He then moved back East and accepted the presidency at Community College of Baltimore, where he served from 1977-1982. From 1982 until 1987, he served as president of El Camino College in Torrance, California. In 1987, he was appointed president of the University of the District of Columbia and served in that post until 1990, when he was named president of Wayne County Community College in Detroit, Michigan. From 1994-1999, Cortada was president of Central Ohio Technical College in

Newark, Ohio. From 1999 until his retirement in 2001, Cortada taught history education at Ohio State University at Newark.

Cortada passed away on April 11, 2017 at age 83.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Rafael Cortada was conducted by Racine Tucker Hamilton on June 15, 2004, in Finksburg, Maryland, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. College president Rafael Cortada (1934 - 2017) has served as president of several community colleges, including the Metropolitan Community College in Minneapolis, Community College of Baltimore, El Camino College, University of the District of Columbia, and Wayne County Community College.

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:

Cortada, Rafael L.

Hamilton, Racine Tucker (Interviewer)

Lane, Edgar Carey (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Cortada, Rafael L.--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

College President

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 Rafael Cortada, June 15, 2004. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 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 Rafael Cortada, Section A2004_079_001_001, TRT: 0:27:08 ?

Rafael Cortada recalls his family origins in Latin America and the Caribbean.

He remembers his parents and grandparents, and remembers his childhood in the

Bronx, New York, sharing memories from his family life and life in his neighborhood, which was ethnically and culturally diverse. He also recounts his early school years in the New York City public school system, and a Jesuit high school. He also explains his decision to attend Fordham University in New York.

Video Oral History Interview with Rafael Cortada, Section A2004_079_001_002, TRT: 0:29:35 ?

Rafael Cortada continues to describe his experience at Fordham University. He then recalls his stint in the military, during which he was sent to Korea one year after a cease fire ended the Korean War. Cortada discusses his graduate education at Columbia University, where he studied education. He then details his early teaching career, when he taught at both the high school and collegiate levels. Cortada discusses the impact of 'Brown v. Board of Education' and the Black Studies movement on education. He also recounts his presidency at Metropolitan Community College in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Video Oral History Interview with Rafael Cortada, Section A2004_079_001_003, TRT: 0:30:07 ?

Rafael Cortada discusses the impact of his book, 'Black Studies: An Urban and Comparative Curriculum', explaining how he helped to advocate for black studies programs in schools and universities. Cortada describes his tenures as president of several community colleges in Minnesota, Baltimore, California, and the District of Columbia. He also shares his views on the state of historically black colleges, the rising cost of higher education, and the backlash against affirmative action. Cortada concludes by reflecting on the course of his career.

Video Oral History Interview with Rafael Cortada, Section A2004_079_001_004, TRT: 0:14:27 ?

Rafael Cortada reflects on his life and career, assessing his impact as a teacher, professor, and administrator. Cortada discusses the impact of minorities in higher education. He also outlines the need for cooperation between African Americans and Hispanics, since America grows more diverse and multicultural by the day. He also expresses his hopes for the African American community, stressing the need for education and expanded opportunities.