

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Mujahid Ramadan

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Ramadan, Mujahid
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Mujahid Ramadan,
<b>Dates:</b>	September 29, 2004
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2004
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:18:58).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Business consulting chief executive and imam Mujahid Ramadan (1951 - ) served as the resident Imam of the Masjid As-Sabur in Las Vegas, Nevada, and vice-chair of the American Muslim Council. In addition to holding these positions, Ramadan has been involved with several interfaith commissions, and has acted as an advisor on interfaith and diversity matters on the national level. Ramadan was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 29, 2004, in Las Vegas, Nevada. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2004_184
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Diversity and human relations consultant Imam Mujahid Ramadan was born November 17, 1951, on the outskirts of Lake Providence, Louisiana. Raised by his stepfather and his mother, Flenorte and Elizabeth Harris, Ramadan attended Carroll Elementary School in Louisiana. When his family moved to Las Vegas, Nevada, Ramadan attended Kit Carson Elementary, J.D. Smith Junior High School, and graduated from Valley View High School in 1970. Ramadan was involved as a youth, in his church, as a youth member of the NAACP, and later as a member of the Black Panther Party. Ramadan attended Northeastern Oklahoma A & M Junior College, but dropped out and returned to Las Vegas. Ramadan worked at the West Side Boy's Club where a hydrocephalic youngster named John "Bookie" Dorsey inspired him to return to school. Ramadan earned his B.A. degree in sociology from the University of Nevada at Las Vegas in 1976. He later became director of the West Side Boys Club.

Ramadan embraced Islam in 1975, took a Muslim name in 1981, and eventually became resident Imam of the Masjid As-Sabur in Las Vegas, Nevada, and vice-chair of the American Muslim Council (AMC). Ramadan served in the probation department of Clarke County Juvenile Services and became a policy advisor to the Las Vegas Police Department, Sheriff's Department, and a number of elected officials including Senator Harry Reid. In 1989, Ramadan was appointed Nevada State Drug Policy Director by Governor Bill Miller. Ramadan was later appointed CEO of Nevada Partners Organization, Inc.; he also served as a national executive board member of the National Conference for Community and Justice.

Ramadan later became a member of the local interfaith council and developed a reputation for being an expert in diversity awareness training. Ramadan served as an advisor to the President's Faith Community Initiative; a board member of the Inter-Faith Council for Workers Justice; a participant in the National Leadership Summit on Race Relations and America's Public Education System; and a trainer for the Justice Department Violent Crimes

Program.

In 1983, Ramadan founded the diversity training firm, M.R. Consulting, later renamed Ramadan Ballard and Associates. Ramadan went on to serve as CEO of Ballard Communications, which he founded in 2001.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Mujahid Ramadan was conducted by Larry Crowe on September 29, 2004, in Las Vegas, Nevada, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Business consulting chief executive and imam Mujahid Ramadan (1951 - ) served as the resident Imam of the Masjid As-Sabur in Las Vegas, Nevada, and vice-chair of the American Muslim Council. In addition to holding these positions, Ramadan has been involved with several interfaith commissions, and has acted as an advisor on interfaith and diversity matters on the national level.

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## 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Ramadan, Mujahid

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Ramadan, Mujahid--Interviews

African American clergy--Interviews

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African American Muslims--Interviews

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Imams (Mosque officers)--United States--Interviews

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## **Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## **Occupations:**

Imam

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

ReligionMakers

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## **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 Mujahid Ramadan, September 29, 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).

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## **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 Mujahid Ramadan, Section A2004\_184\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:25  
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Mujahid Ramadan was born on November 17, 1951 in Lake Providence, Louisiana to Elizabeth Harris and Johnny Young, also both Louisiana natives. His maternal great-great grandmother was a freed slave and his maternal grandparents owned a grocery store. Ramadan's maternal grandfather fought in World War I with Emmett Till's father and was a member of the Deacons for Defense and Justice along with Ramadan's father. Ramadan's paternal grandfather was a minister who fled Louisiana after retaliating against a police officer who accosted him. Ramadan's mother, a woman of strong religious conviction, was a twin and had two other siblings. Ramadan's father and Ramadan's youngest brother both died when Ramadan was young, leaving his mother a single parent. His mother remarried, and the family moved to Las Vegas, Nevada. His mother worked in the tourism industry. Ramadan reflects upon Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s transformative nonviolent movement and Mahatma Gandhi's influence on the Civil Rights Movement.

African American clergy--Interviews.

African American Muslims--Interviews.

Imams (Mosque officers)--United States--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Mujahid Ramadan, Section A2004\_184\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:44  
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Mujahid Ramadan's father was killed in a work-related accident on the rail road when Ramadan was four years old. Two years later, Ramadan's house caught fire and his brother died. Ramadan attended Carroll Elementary School in Lake Providence, Louisiana. From his childhood in Lake Providence, he remembers growing up without a TV, the smell of hay, southern rainstorms, changing seasons and the sounds of trucks on U.S. Route 65. Ramadan's mother married Flenorte Harris, and the family moved to Las Vegas when he was ten. Ramadan describes his stepfather's intelligence, work ethic, and their relationship. He recalls the segregation in Las Vegas, the differences between Louisiana and Nevada, and the notable African American doctors who lived in his community, James B. McMillan and Charles I. West, the founder of the newspaper Las Vegas Voice. Ramadan attended Kit Carson Elementary School, J.D. Smith Junior High School, and Valley High School in Las Vegas.

Video Oral History Interview with Mujahid Ramadan, Section A2004\_184\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:19  
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Mujahid Ramadan played football and ran track at Valley High School in Las Vegas, where his coach, Overton Curtis, taught him valuable lessons about responsibility. Ramadan also recalls the positive influence of his tight-knit African American community and his parents. His political awareness grew as he read works by Malcolm X and Kwame Nkrumah and was introduced to the Black Panther Party by his friend, Tommy Jones. Ramadan attended Northeastern Oklahoma Junior College in Miami, Oklahoma in the hopes of transferring to the University of Oklahoma. However, he left after one semester and returned to Las Vegas. Ramadan then worked at the Boys Club of Clark County, where he created an advisory board and spearheaded the building of a

swimming pool in a low-income neighborhood. Ramadan remembers some of the clubs members who impacted him, like John Dorsey, a young man with hydrocephaly. In 1975, Ramadan and his wife, Sumayah Ramadan, embraced Islam after meeting a Sunni Muslim, Abdura Manbucardi.

Video Oral History Interview with Mujahid Ramadan, Section A2004\_184\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:16  
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Mujahid Ramadan converted to Islam in 1975 and legally changed his name in 1982. Ramadan recalls that many in his family and neighborhood felt betrayed by his spiritual and cultural transformation. Ramadan was uncertain about the Nation of Islam during the early years of his conversion because of the emphasis on hatred towards non-Muslims and on culture instead of spirituality. When Ramadan heard the teachings of Warith Deen Mohammed in 1982, he found a way to reconcile his sensibilities and identity as an African American with Islam. Ramadan dispels common misperceptions about Islam in relation to dress, terrorism, and sexism. He argues that Arab Muslims practice an antiquated form of Islam, and that African American Muslims are practicing the true Islamic religion. He describes the history of Quranic language and how it differs from colloquial Arabic, the practice of choosing an Arabic name, and the meaning of his Muslim name.

Video Oral History Interview with Mujahid Ramadan, Section A2004\_184\_001\_005, TRT: 0:30:43  
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Mujahid Ramadan describes schisms in the Nation of Islam that occurred after the death of Elijah Muhammad in 1975 and the various factions that resulted, such as HistoryMaker Minister Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam. Inspired by Warith Deen Mohammed, Elijah Muhammad's son, Ramadan joined the American Society of Muslims. He recalls meeting Mohammed in 1984. Ramadan became an imam at the Masjid As-Sabur in Las Vegas. As an imam, Ramadan spearheaded inter-faith initiatives through the National Conference for Community and Justice. Ramadan reflects upon the differences between African American Muslims and Arab Muslims, spirituality versus religion, and how Islam allowed him to fully understand his identity as an American. He shares his concerns about Arab Muslims in the U.S. who try to convert Americans to their form of Islam. Ramadan was a policy advisor for Senator Harry Reid and was appointed Nevada's drug policy director by Governor Robert Miller. Later, Ramadan served as CEO for Nevada Partners.

Video Oral History Interview with Mujahid Ramadan, Section A2004\_184\_001\_006, TRT: 0:30:25  
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Mujahid Ramadan served as director and CEO of Nevada Partners. Founded by Governor Robert Miller and businessman Kirk Kerkorian, Nevada Partners helped disenfranchised populations moving to Las Vegas, Nevada find employment and gain job skills. In 2001, Ramadan left Nevada Partners and formed his own company, M.R. Consulting, which later merged with Ballard Communications. His company provided diversity training to MGM Resorts International, the Las Vegas police department, and the Clark County School District. Ramadan reflects upon the growing population of African American professionals in Las Vegas and the experiences of different cultural groups who immigrate to the U.S. Ramadan describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community. In defining the African American experience as unique and distinct, he reflects upon the legacy of slavery for African Americans.

Video Oral History Interview with Mujahid Ramadan, Section A2004\_184\_001\_007, TRT: 0:16:06  
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Mujahid Ramadan recalls his appointment as drug policy director for the State of

Nevada under Governor Robert Miller and his mother's reaction to his successful career. He reflects upon the need to make American inclusive for all ethnic and cultural groups, his life, and his legacy. Ramadan concludes the interview by describing how he would like to be remembered.