

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Michael A. Schultz

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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>	Schultz, Michael, 1938-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Michael A. Schultz,
<b>Dates:</b>	October 5, 2004
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2004
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:15:08).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Film director Michael A. Schultz (1938 - ) directed the feature films <i>Cooley High</i> , <i>Car Wash</i> , and <i>Krush Groove</i> , as well as the television shows <i>Chicago Hope</i> and <i>Ally McBeal</i> . Schultz was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 5, 2004, in Santa Monica, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2004_193
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Film director Michael Schultz was born on November 10, 1938, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. After graduating from high school in 1957, Schultz attended the University of Wisconsin, where he spent a great deal of time watching foreign films. After dropping out of school, Schultz returned to Milwaukee where he worked in a steel mill from 1960 to 1961, eventually returning to school, studying at Marquette, and graduating in 1964.

After graduation, Schultz attended Princeton University, where he was given the opportunity to direct his first play, *Waiting for Godot*, in 1966. Schultz's work brought him to the attention of the Negro Ensemble Company; he joined the group in 1968. The following year, Schultz staged a production of *To Be Young, Gifted and Black*, which launched his success; he re-staged the play for television two years later. In the early 1970s, Schultz directed a number of television programs, including *Baretta* and *Starsky and Hutch*, and then began to focus his time on films. In 1975, Schultz directed *Cooley High*, and the following year, *Car Wash*; his success continued, directing more than a dozen movies for the television and the big screen throughout the 70s and 80s, including *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hears Club Band*, *Krush Groove*, about the rise of hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons, and the comedy *Disorderlies*.

Schultz continued to direct throughout the 1990s, directing a number of popular television shows, including *Chicago Hope*, *JAG*, *Ally McBeal*, and *Charmed*, as well as several more made for television movies. After 2000, Schultz directed several other television shows, and in 2004, he directed *Woman Thou Art Loosed*. Schultz has also been involved in film and television production, having served as producer of the popular television show *Everwood*, as well as having produced some of his earlier film work.

In addition to his work on the big and small screen, Schultz also found time to direct theater; notably his Broadway production of *Mule Bone*, written by Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston, staged in 1991.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Michael A. Schultz was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 5, 2004, in Santa Monica, California, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Film director Michael A. Schultz (1938 - ) directed the feature films Cooley High, Car Wash, and Krush Groove, as well as the television shows Chicago Hope and Ally McBeal.

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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:

Schultz, Michael, 1938-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Schultz, Michael, 1938---Interviews

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African American motion picture producers and directors--Interviews

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African American television producers and directors--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:

Film Director

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers

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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 Michael A. Schultz, October 5, 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Michael A. Schultz, Section A2004\_193\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:23 ?

Michael A. Schultz was born on November 10, 1938 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His paternal great-great-grandfather was enslaved by a German plantation

owner. After the owner willed his land to him, Schultz's great-great-grandfather adopted the man's name. Schultz's father, Leo Schultz, was born in the 1910s in Springfield, Illinois. His family owned a coal mine in Kentucky during the Great Depression, and he taught himself how to play the trumpet. Schultz's maternal grandmother was Cherokee, worked on a boat that traveled between Milwaukee and Michigan and had several marriages. His mother, Katherine Leslie, was born in 1917 in Chicago. An industrious worker, Leslie commuted from Milwaukee to nursing school in Chicago. After divorcing Schultz's father, she raised Schultz and his brother with the help of her mother. Growing up in an all-black neighborhood in Milwaukee, Schultz enjoyed reading and tennis. He also converted to Catholicism with his mother. When he was fourteen, his first job was in a fish market.

African American motion picture producers and directors--Interviews.

African American television producers and directors--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Michael A. Schultz, Section A2004\_193\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:31 ?

Michael A. Schultz enjoyed comedic film, theater and television productions. In elementary school, Schultz participated in plays. As a student at the majority-white Riverside High School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, he focused on sports and aspired to be a career general in the U.S. Air Force. He applied to the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado, which accepted one candidate from each state. Due to his low math scores, he became Wisconsin's alternate candidate. After graduating from high school in 1957, he attended University of Wisconsin-Madison's astronautical engineering program. During college, he developed his interest in film and foreign film directors, including Federico Fellini and Franco Zeffirelli. After taking a break from school, he returned to Milwaukee where he worked in a steel mill and joined a community theater production. To pursue his interest in theater, he obtained a scholarship and worked on a work-study basis as a lighting designer at Marquette University.

Video Oral History Interview with Michael A. Schultz, Section A2004\_193\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:14 ?

Michael A. Schultz studied drama with Reverend John J. Walsh at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin where he gained skills in dancing, acting and production. At Marquette, he also developed an interest in directing. In 1964, he moved to New York City where he worked for an insurance company by escorting VIPs to events at the World's Fair. Then, he became assistant stage manager at Wynn Handman's American Place Theatre. Schultz acted under Jonathan Miller's direction in 'Benito Cereno,' which explored the story of the Amistad slave ship. He and his wife, Gloria Schultz, relocated to Princeton, New Jersey where they joined the acting company at McCarter Theatre. While there, he directed 'Waiting for Godot' and 'The Emperor Jones.' When the company traveled to Yellow Springs, Ohio for a summer festival, Schultz met HistoryMaker Douglas Turner Ward. Schultz assisted Ward in locating a translator for 'Song of the Lusitanian Bogey,' which Schultz directed for the Negro Ensemble Company's inaugural season.

Video Oral History Interview with Michael A. Schultz, Section A2004\_193\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:12 ?

Michael A. Schultz directed 'Song of the Lusitanian Bogey' for the Negro Ensemble Company (NEC)'s inaugural season. With the crew and company using improvisational techniques, Schultz portrayed the brutality of Portuguese colonization in Africa. Schultz directed Wole Soyinka's 'Kongi's Harvest' for NEC before directing the Tony Award-winning production 'Does a Tiger Wear

a Necktie?’ The play’s success led Schultz from theater to film with his directorial debut ‘To Be Young, Gifted and Black,’ based on the life of Lorraine Hansberry. In 1970, he directed the play ‘Dream on Monkey Mountain’ at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles, California and the NEC in New York City. After directing ‘Honey Baby, Honey Baby’ in Beirut, Lebanon, Schultz returned to Los Angeles where another of his film production’s, ‘Death at an Early Age,’ was in disarray. He directed one episode of ‘Roll Out,’ a Hollywood TV show based on the black transportation division during World War II, which was promptly canceled.

Video Oral History Interview with Michael A. Schultz, Section A2004\_193\_001\_005, TRT: 0:30:26 ?

Michael A. Schultz directed episodic television shows produced by Universal Studios before collaborating with Eric Monte on the 1975 film ‘Cooley High.’ Filmed mostly in Chicago, Illinois, ‘Cooley High’ included professional and non-professional cast members and resonated with African American and white audiences. Schultz strove to reflect African American experiences more accurately than many films of the era. However, he experienced pushback from the majority-white movie industry that considered themes of sex and violence more profitable. After ‘Cooley High,’ Universal Studios offered Schultz an opportunity to direct ‘Car Wash,’ which he initially turned down. However, HistoryMaker Berry Gordy’s assistant, Suzanne de Passe, convinced him to accept it. Schultz shot the film sequentially from beginning to end as an homage to Robert Altman. He also successfully incorporated drama with comedy, something that Hollywood resisted. In 2004, he directed an award-winning, independent film, ‘Woman Thou Art Loosed.’

Video Oral History Interview with Michael A. Schultz, Section A2004\_193\_001\_006, TRT: 0:31:14 ?

Michael A. Schultz directed Richard Pryor in ‘Greased Lightning’ and ‘Which Way Is Up?,’ an American adaptation of an Italian film, ‘The Seduction of Mimi.’ While recovering from an accident, Pryor asked Schultz to take over the direction of ‘Bustin’ Loose,’ which Schultz successfully did. Schultz directed ‘Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band,’ a long form music video in which the Bee Gees portrayed the Beatles; the film did well financially everywhere except North America and England. In the mid-1980s, after his cult classic ‘The Last Dragon,’ Schultz directed ‘Krush Groove,’ which featured rappers when the rap genre was new and had a predominantly African American audience. In 2004, Schultz directed ‘Woman Thou Art Loosed,’ an independent film that explored the effects of child abuse. Schultz also reflects upon his life and filmmaking philosophy. To conclude, he praises talented young black directors, such as Kasi Lemmons and Antoine Fuqua.

Video Oral History Interview with Michael A. Schultz, Section A2004\_193\_001\_007, TRT: 0:15:08 ?

Michael A. Schultz’s mother witnessed Schultz’s success in both theater and film before she passed away. With his wife Gloria Schultz (Lauren Jones), Schultz has three sons. His oldest son is a musician while his youngest son runs the family’s animation company, ImajiMation Studios, which produced a hip hop comic book, ‘Blokheadz.’ After describing his current and future film and episodic television and projects, Schultz offers his definition of a “black movie.” Schultz comments on the success of Robert Townsend, Bill Duke and the Wayans brothers and the persistent stereotypes of African Americans in the film industry. He concludes the tape by reflecting upon his legacy and describing how he would like to be remembered.