

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Calvin Hicks

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Hicks, Calvin, 1933-2013
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Hicks,
Dates:	October 15, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:16:56).
Abstract:	Academic administrator and newspaper correspondent Calvin Hicks (1933 - 2013) was the Director of Community Collaborations at the New England Conservatory of Music, and had taught at Brandeis University, Goddard College and Brown University. Hicks was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 15, 2004, in Boston, Massachusetts. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_208
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Calvin L. Hicks is director of community collaborations and program development and a member of the liberal arts faculty at the renowned New England Conservatory of Music (NEC) in Boston, Massachusetts. Born on August 18, 1933 in Boston, Hicks was profoundly influenced by his mother, Marguerite (Calvin) Hicks, a left-wing political activist and writer, and his maternal grandparents, Lenora and Thomas Calvin, who were strict Christians and devoted church activists. Absorbing his mother's interest in writing, he began his journalistic endeavors while still in high school, writing for the Boston Chronicle, a Black weekly newspaper.

After graduating from English High School in Boston in 1950, Hicks attended Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, studying journalism and political science. After a brief stint with the Baltimore Afro-American newspaper, he moved on to New York City where he spent twelve years writing and teaching in the humanities and third world studies. During these years, he was engaged in national and international liberation struggles of the 1960s, and for a brief period during this time, he was employed at Time Magazine as a researcher. In New York City, he founded and chaired the On Guard Committee for Freedom, which included as members individuals such as Amiri Baraka, Archie Shepp, A.B. Spellman and Walter Bowe, and was executive director of the Monroe Defense Committee in support of Robert Williams and was influential in the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. With poet and writer Tom Dent, Hicks was one of the founders of Umbra Magazine and was also a member of the prestigious Harlem Writers Guild. As a freelance writer, Hicks' articles appeared in Freedomways, New Challenge and others. He was also a full-time reporter with New York Age newspaper. During his time in New York City, Hicks also worked as an instructor at Brooklyn College, City College of New York and Richmond College.

Returning to the Boston area in 1969, Hicks was offered a professorship in the sociology department at Brandeis University, the first African American to be offered this position, and then directed undergraduate and graduate programs in the Third World Studies Program at Goddard College in Vermont. He was a member of the faculty in

the African American studies department and was the director of the Third World Center at Brown University. Hicks then moved on to serve as division chair of liberal arts and dean of academic affairs at Roxbury Community College in Boston. He was a co-founder of the Black Educators Roundtable in Boston, and from 1974 to 1975, Hicks was a graduate fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Graduate Department of Urban Planning and Urban Studies. In 1984, he received his master's degree in the philosophy of education from Cambridge College in Massachusetts.

Under Hicks' direction since 1992, Community Collaborations and Program Development at NEC has developed a dynamic music arts program, providing educational services and music instruction to a wide variety of individuals of all ages and cultures, as well as a host of traditional and non-traditional academic, civic and social institutions across the city of Boston. Among them are Music for Senior Citizens, the NEC Community Gospel Chorus, and the Roland Hayes/Marian Anderson Concert Series. Hicks has also been the driving force behind performances, symposia and events that have been for the benefit of Boston Public School teachers and students. In 1999, he began the Thomas A. Dorsey Summer Gospel Institute to take a more detailed look into the roots of gospel music. He also developed the Memory and Society: Theaters of Memory Remembering for the Present and the Future as well as the Institute for the Study of African American Secular and Sacred Music, both Summer Institutes. He was also a faculty member at the Longy School of Music in Cambridge, Massachusetts in the Department of Modern American Music.

Hicks passed away on August 25, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Calvin Hicks was conducted by Robert Hayden on October 15, 2004, in Boston, Massachusetts, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Academic administrator and newspaper correspondent Calvin Hicks (1933 - 2013) was the Director of Community Collaborations at the New England Conservatory of Music, and had taught at Brandeis University, Goddard College and Brown University.

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:

Hicks, Calvin, 1933-2013

Hayden, Robert (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Hicks, Calvin, 1933-2013--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

New England Conservatory of Music

Occupations:

Academic Administrator

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 Calvin Hicks, October 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 Calvin Hicks, Section A2004_208_001_001, TRT: 0:31:11 ?

Calvin Hicks was born August 18, 1933 in Boston, Massachusetts. His maternal grandparents moved to Florida from South Carolina before settling in the South End of Boston. Hicks' maternal grandmother was very involved in Ebenezer Baptist Church, and his maternal grandfather was a day laborer. Hicks' mother, Marguerite Calvin Hicks, attended Boston Public Schools and Boston University briefly. She aspired to be a writer and was published a few times but never had the chance to fully develop her talent. Her involvement with the Communist Party USA meant that many political figures visited the family home during Hicks' childhood including Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Paul Robeson and William L. Patterson. Hicks' father, Louis Hicks, was born in Litchfield, Connecticut and was orphaned early in life. Hicks' father and paternal uncle moved to Boston, and both worked in the post office. Hicks, impacted by his mother's political interests and thwarted aspirations, wrote for the Boston Chronicle in high school.

Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Hicks, Section A2004_208_001_002, TRT: 0:28:20 ?

Calvin Hicks' father had many jobs, including a cleaning business that Hicks occasionally worked for as a youth. A white contractor of the business they were cleaning once berated Hicks' father in front of Hicks and other employees, and Hicks defended his father. Hicks was required to spend every Sunday at Ebenezer Baptist Church throughout his childhood. He attended various elementary schools before matriculating at English High School in Boston, Massachusetts. In high school, Hicks enjoyed jazz music, played sports and was the president of the Boston NAACP youth chapter until he was removed because of his mother's communist affiliation. After graduating in 1952, he entered Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, inspired by Johnny Bright's presence on the Drake football team. Hicks was among a small number of African American students in Des Moines, which was unofficially segregated. Despite the social isolation, he enjoyed some of his courses and played semi-professional ice hockey during his college years.

Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Hicks, Section A2004_208_001_003, TRT: 0:31:00 ?

Calvin Hicks left Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa his junior year. Hicks then hitchhiked to Chicago, Illinois where he tried unsuccessfully to be hired by the Chicago Defender. He worked for the Baltimore Afro-American briefly before leaving Maryland for New York, New York where he was a researcher for Time. Through his participation in the Harlem Writers Guild, he met fellow member John Henrik Clarke. Hicks worked for various publications throughout

his twenties. He also edited a publication for the On Guard Committee for Freedom. From 1966 to 1969, Hicks taught part-time at several colleges in New York City. During that time, his son and daughter were born. Hicks became one of the first African Americans to join the faculty at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts. He taught in the sociology department but was dissatisfied there. While conducting an oral history of Mound Bayou, Mississippi, Hicks was asked to help create the third world studies program at Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont.

Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Hicks, Section A2004_208_001_004, TRT: 0:31:11 ?

Calvin Hicks worked with a number of left-wing organizations, such as the Committee to Aid the Monroe Defendants, in New York, New York during the 1960s. He met W.E.B. DuBois, edited the On Guard publication and helped with Tom Dent's Umbra magazine. With Amiri Baraka, he consolidated On Guard Committee for Freedom and An Organization of Young Men, and became leader of the newly-joined alliance. When Hicks returned to Massachusetts in 1969, he missed the vibrant black community in New York City. Hicks served as a consultant for a college preparation program in the Boston Public Schools and conducted a police-community relations study in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Hicks then headed the Third World Center while teaching sociology, history and humanities at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island until 1980. After completing his master's degree at Cambridge College, he ran the liberal arts division before serving as dean of academic affairs at Roxbury Community College in Roxbury Crossing, Massachusetts.

Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Hicks, Section A2004_208_001_005, TRT: 0:31:11 ?

Calvin Hicks taught part-time at Bunker Hill Community College in Boston, Massachusetts after leaving Roxbury Community College in 1990. In 1992, he was hired by the New England Conservatory of Music (NEC) in Boston, where he became the director of its annual gospel jubilee. The program was underfunded and neglected, so Hicks restructured the event, renaming it the Thomas A. Dorsey Gospel Jubilee. He introduced themes, such as the celebrating the music of Thelonious Monk and Duke Ellington. To increase the event's prominence, Hicks held it in a larger venue, Cathedral of the Holy Cross. The jubilee brought in well-known gospel music names, such as Richard Smallwood, the Mississippi Mass Choir and Horace Clarence Boyer. Hicks created the Thomas A. Dorsey Gospel Summer Institute, a community music program, and the NEC Community Gospel Choir and NEC Gospel Millennium Choir. He reflects upon his career at the New England Conservatory of Music and in higher education.

Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Hicks, Section A2004_208_001_006, TRT: 0:31:00 ?

Calvin Hicks visited The University of the West Indies at Cave Hill in Barbados during his tenure at Brandeis University. During that era of the 1970s, he witnessed the creation of numerous afro-centric institutions and the challenges involved in maintaining them. His oral history research on the African American community of Mound Bayou, Mississippi inspired him to head the third world studies program at Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont, despite his initial misgivings about the college. He also founded the third world studies graduate program at Goddard-Cambridge Graduate Program in Social Change in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In this part of the interview, Hicks reflects upon the challenges of sustaining educational institutions, his life and his legacy. He describes his concerns for the African American community and how he hopes to be remembered. He concludes by narrating his photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Calvin Hicks, Section A2004_208_001_007, TRT: 0:13:03 ?

Calvin Hicks narrates his photographs.