

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Sokoni Karanja

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Karanja, Sokoni, 1940-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Sokoni Karanja,
Dates:	January 7, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:39:13).
Abstract:	Community development chief executive Sokoni Karanja (1940 -) was the founder of Centers for New Horizons, Inc., a value-driven Afrocentric community center. The center, which has twenty-two sites and serves over 2000 families, offers many services, including early childhood education, childcare, senior care, employment programs and leadership training. Karanja received the MacArthur "genius" Fellowship in 1993. Karanja was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 7, 2005, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_004
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Founding director of Chicago's Center for New Horizons, Sokoni Tacuma Karanja was born Lathan Johnson on January 7, 1940, in Topeka, Kansas. He was raised in the Tennessee Town section of Topeka by his father, Hubert, a worker on the Santa Fe Railroad, and his mother, Florence, a nurse. McKinley Johnson, president of the Topeka NAACP and catalyst of *Brown v. the Board of Education*, also mentored Karanja. Karanja attended Buchanan Elementary School, Boswell Junior High School and graduated from Topeka High School in 1958. He attended Ft. Scott Junior College, where he starred in track, and he earned his B.A. degree from Topeka's Washburn University in 1961. He received a masters degree in psychology from the University of Denver, another in social work from Atlanta University, and another in community planning from the University of Cincinnati. He received his Ph.D. degree in urban policy from Brandeis University, where he was assistant dean of students, in 1971.

Studying for his Ph.D. in Tanzania, East Africa, Karanja was influenced by Tanzanian president Dr. Julius K. Nyerere's value-driven educational and developmental programs. There he received his name, which means "person from the sea who is willing to share knowledge." As an Adlai Stevenson fellow at the University of Chicago in 1971, Karanja received funding for The Center for New Horizons. The center, which has twenty-two sites and serves over 2000 families, offers many services, including early childhood education, childcare, senior care, employment programs and leadership training.

A national leader on child development issues, Karanja is a task force member of the Council for Accreditation; executive committee co-chair of the Policy Council of the African American Family Commission; and an executive committee member of the Child Welfare League of America. He also serves on the Illinois Governor's Task Force on Human Services and the boards of Leadership for Quality Education and Voices of Illinois Children. He chairs the Woodstock Institute and is co-chair of the Grand Boulevard Federation. In 1993, Karanja

received a MacArthur Fellowship. Karanja is married to professor Ayanna Karanja and is the father of five children.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Sokoni Karanja was conducted by Larry Crowe on January 7, 2005, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Community development chief executive Sokoni Karanja (1940 -) was the founder of Centers for New Horizons, Inc., a value-driven Afrocentric community center. The center, which has twenty-two sites and serves over 2000 families, offers many services, including early childhood education, childcare, senior care, employment programs and leadership training. Karanja received the MacArthur "genius" Fellowship in 1993.

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:

Karanja, Sokoni, 1940-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Karanja, Sokoni, 1940---Interviews

African American chief executive officers--Interviews.

African American civic leaders--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Nonprofit Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Sokoni Karanja, January 7, 2005. 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 Sokoni Karanja, Section A2005_004_001_001, TRT: 0:29:37 ?

Centers for New Horizons, Inc. founder Sokoni Karanja describes his family background, detailing his ancestors on his mother's side. Karanja recalls stories about two of his uncles who were prominent gangsters in Topeka, Kansas, as well as other stories about his family. Karanja also recalls getting to know NAACP leader McKinley Burnett through his participation in church in Topeka.

African American families--Kansas--Topeka.

Burnett, McKinley L. (McKinley Langford), 1897-1968.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People--Kansas--Topeka.

African American churches--Kansas--Topeka.

Video Oral History Interview with Sokoni Karanja, Section A2005_004_001_002, TRT: 0:28:34 ?

Centers for New Horizons, Inc. founder Sokoni Karanja describes his youth, including being influenced by Topeka, Kansas NAACP president McKinley Burnett and author J. A. Rogers. Karanja then describes his childhood in Topeka, including stories about his siblings. Karanja also describes his schooling experience up through junior high school in Topeka, including a comparison of schools before and after integration.

Burnett, McKinley L. (McKinley Langford), 1897-1968.

Rogers, J. A. (Joel Augustus), 1880-1966.

Childhood and youth--Kansas--Topeka.

Education--Kansas--Topeka.

School integration--Kansas--Topeka.

Video Oral History Interview with Sokoni Karanja, Section A2005_004_001_003, TRT: 0:28:38 ?

Centers for New Horizons, Inc. founder Sokoni Karanja describes his early life and high school education in Topeka, Kansas. Karanja describes incidences of racism that helped to shape his social views. Karanja then describes his studies at many different universities, including Washburn University, Atlanta University, University of Cincinnati, and Brandeis University. Karanja details civil rights activism in Atlanta during the 1960s and describes his own activism while he was at Cincinnati.

Education, Higher--Kansas--Topeka.

Racism--Kansas--Topeka.

Washburn University of Topeka.

Atlanta University.

University of Cincinnati.

Brandeis University.

Civil rights movement--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Sokoni Karanja, Section A2005_004_001_004, TRT: 0:29:51 ?

Centers for New Horizons, Inc. founder Sokoni Karanja describes his experience as an administrator at Brandeis University, recalling a time when he accompanied a student takeover of an administrative building on campus. Karanja then details his experiences from Tanzania, where he lived in villages while researching Julius Nyerere and the Ujamaa economic method. Karanja then describes his return to the United States and his attendance of Black Power conferences in the 1970s.

Brandeis University.

African American college administrators.

Studying and teaching--Tanzania.

Nyerere, Julius K., 1922-1999.

Black Power Conference.

Video Oral History Interview with Sokoni Karanja, Section A2005_004_001_005, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Centers for New Horizons, Inc. founder Sokoni Karanja describes the influence of Maulana Karenga and shares his impressions of Eldridge Cleaver. Karanja then goes into a detailed description of how he founded Centers for New Horizons, Inc. (Centers), a community childhood education initiative. Karanja then describes the goals, success, and expansion of Centers, which now has twenty locations on Chicago's South Side. Karanja then tells the story of when he was victimized by police brutality in 2004.

Karenga, Maulana.

Cleaver, Eldridge, 1935-1998.

African Americans--Education.

African Americans--Police brutality.

Video Oral History Interview with Sokoni Karanja, Section A2005_004_001_006, TRT: 0:12:03 ?

Centers for New Horizons Sokoni Karanja details his future plans for opening new Centers and developing more programs. Karanja then reflects on his career as an organizer and shares his concerns for African American communities. Karaja also describes the influence of his family on his career and considers his legacy.

African American leadership.

African American families.