

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Rickey Payton, Sr.

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Payton, Rickey
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Rickey Payton, Sr.,
Dates:	May 3, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:55:40).
Abstract:	Nonprofit chief executive and music composer Rickey Payton, Sr. (1959 -) is a musical prodigy, most known for his Emmy Award winning score for the documentary, <i>New Cotton Club Review</i> , and is the co-founder and artistic director of Urban Nation H.I.P.-H.O.P. Payton was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 3, 2005, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_116
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Urban Nation Music founder and CEO Rickey Payton was born June 16, 1959 in Washington, D.C., the son of Dazelle Inez Mourning Payton and William Lee Payton, Sr. He started taking piano lessons in kindergarten at Parkview Elementary School. Inspired by Rance Allen, Al Green and Stevie Wonder, Payton played “Walk Him Up” from *Purlie*, by ear, for his 5th grade assembly at Raymond Elementary School and continued to excel in music through Lincoln Junior High School. In 1972, he composed music for NBC’s *The Sunshine Store*. While at Cardoza High School, Payton scored the Emmy Award winning documentary *New Cotton Club Review* before he graduated in 1977. Attending Howard University, Payton majored in music, business administration, and studied entertainment law. Payton was selected to study and perform in Galen, Switzerland in his freshman year. Payton also attended music conservatories in Paris and in Switzerland. At Howard, Payton met the Honorable Walter Fauntroy, who he collaborated with on a musical tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Payton, as a performer, has toured Europe, Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. He has appeared at the International Jazz Festival in Montreux, Switzerland, and has given command performances at the White House, the Vatican and performed for President Mitterand of France, Queen Elizabeth and the British Royal Family, and Mikhail Gorbachev of the former Soviet Union. Payton composes music for the annual Christmas production of the Washington, D.C. Department of Recreation and Howard’s PBS WHUT Channel 32. In 1994, Payton was co-founder and former board member of City at Peace, a diverse youth theatrical group promoting ethnic understanding. The organization was featured by Ted Koppel on ABC’s *Nightline* in 1995. Payton’s song, “Let’s Build a Bridge All Across America” was featured at President Clinton’s second inauguration in 1996. In 1997, Payton co-founded Urban Nation, Inc. with Sheila Crump and serves as its president and CEO. He is also the artistic director of the Urban Nation H.I.P. – H.O.P. (Hope, Integrity, Power – Helping Our People) Choir. In 1998 Payton was featured in the documentary film, *City at Peace* directed by Susan Koch and with Barbara Streisand as executive producer.

Payton serves as minister of music for New Bethel Church of God in Christ and for over 15 years he has taught choral at Sidwell Friends School. In 2000, Payton received the Distinguished Service Award from Dr. Dorothy Height and the National Council of Negro Women. He produced and coordinated the 2002 Get Out the Vote Rally at the Lincoln Theatre and was artistic director and conductor for Coca-Cola's This is Our World at the Library of Congress. A 2004 Linowes Leadership Award recipient, Payton is an official voting member of the Grammy Awards.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Rickey Payton, Sr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 3, 2005, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Nonprofit chief executive and music composer Rickey Payton, Sr. (1959 -) is a musical prodigy, most known for his Emmy Award winning score for the documentary, New Cotton Club Review, and is the co-founder and artistic director of Urban Nation H.I.P.- H.O.P.

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:

Payton, Rickey

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Payton, Rickey--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Nonprofit Chief Executive

Music Composer

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers|MusicMakers

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 Rickey Payton, Sr., May 3, 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 Rickey Payton, Sr., Section A2005_116_001_001, TRT: 0:29:20
?

Rickey Payton, Sr. was born on June 16, 1959 in Washington, D.C. His mother, Dazelle Mourning Payton, was born in Aurora, North Carolina and grew up in an all-black neighborhood that shielded her somewhat from the harshness of segregation. Her family later moved to Danbury, Connecticut. His father, William Payton, Sr., was also born and raised in Aurora. His parents met in their hometown and kept in touch while Payton's father worked as a trucker. They eventually married and moved to Washington, D.C., where they raised their eight children. As a young child, Payton began playing the piano by ear, and his kindergarten teacher soon identified him as a prodigy. He developed his talent through piano lessons, performing at New Bethel Church of God in Christ, and listening to popular gospel and Motown singers. He recalls the smells of his mother's cooking and the sight of the U.S. Army patrolling D.C.'s streets after Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination.

Video Oral History Interview with Rickey Payton, Sr., Section A2005_116_001_002, TRT: 0:28:20
?

Rickey Payton, Sr. witnessed the riots in Washington, D.C. following the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. At Lincoln Junior High School, his teachers encouraged his musical interests, and he performed with the chorus and band. Local musicians Van McCoy, Donald Byrd and Duke Ellington greatly influenced him. While a student at Francis L. Cardoza Senior High School, Payton performed at churches and clubs. At Howard University, he studied music and entertainment law and traveled to St. Gallen, Switzerland for an exchange program. While abroad, he performed in a show called 'Raisin' in Paris, France. After two years, Payton dropped out to pursue a professional music career with his mentor HistoryMaker The Honorable Reverend Walter Fauntroy, who introduced him to important civil rights figures, like HistoryMaker Reverend Dr. Joseph Lowery, and musical artists Natalie Cole and Paul Serrano. After helping to produce a tribute album for King, Payton knew he wanted to be a music producer.

Video Oral History Interview with Rickey Payton, Sr., Section A2005_116_001_003, TRT: 0:28:10
?

Rickey Payton, Sr.'s professional music career began while he was still growing up in Washington, D.C. At the age of twelve, Payton created music for the NBC children's show 'The Sunshine Store' and at sixteen, he scored the Emmy award winning documentary 'New Cotton Club Review.' Since then, he has continued composing for NBC Washington, D.C. In the 1980s, he toured with future U.S. Congressman HistoryMaker The Honorable Reverend Walter Fauntroy. After participating in the cultural exchange program Peace Child, Payton founded City at Peace so teenagers in D.C. could confront violence and other issues in their community by creating and performing plays. Filmmakers Susan and Chris Koch featured the program in their 1998 documentary 'City at Peace.' Shown on ABC's 'Nightline' and HBO, the film won the Crystal Heart Award. Payton shares his thoughts about the African American heritage present in both secular and Christian music and his appreciation for various genres, including hip hop and rap.

Video Oral History Interview with Rickey Payton, Sr., Section A2005_116_001_004, TRT: 0:29:50

?

Rickey Payton, Sr.'s original song 'Let's Build a Bridge' was performed at President Bill Clinton's 1996 inauguration. Throughout his career, Payton performed with many celebrity artists, including Wayne Newton, Michael Jackson, Shania Twain and gospel musicians the Winans and John P. Kee. He has given command performances for foreign dignitaries across Europe. In 1997, he and HistoryMaker Sheila C. Johnson founded Urban Nation, whose H.I.P.-H.O.P. Choir has appeared at the White House and at corporate events. In 2004, Payton was a scholar on Afro-Cuban jazz and gospel music at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. He received an honorary doctorate from Breakthrough Bible College & Theological Seminary in Temple Hills, Maryland. Payton talks about his family's support, his son's near-fatal shooting, and his hopes and concerns for the African American community. He reflects upon his life, legacy, and how he hopes to be remembered, and concludes the interview by performing his song 'Voices for Peace.'