

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Colbert I. King

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	King, Colbert
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Colbert I. King,
Dates:	May 4, 2005 and October 4, 2022
Bulk Dates:	2005 and 2022
Physical Description:	11 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (5:42:19).
Abstract:	Newspaper columnist and editor Colbert King Colbert I. King (1939 -) won the Pulitzer Prize for Commentary in 2003 for his work with The Washington Post. He also served as deputy assistant secretary of the U.S. Treasury Department and U.S. executive director of the World Bank. King was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 4, 2005 and October 4, 2022, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_118
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Newspaper columnist and editor Colbert I. King was born September 20, 1939 to Amelia Colbert King and Isaiah King III in Washington, D.C. Growing up in the old Foggy Bottom section of Washington, D.C., King attended Thaddeus Stevens Elementary School, Francis Junior High School, and graduated from Paul Laurence Dunbar High School in 1957, where he was a member of the ROTC and Dunbar's championship drill team. King earned his B.A. degree in government from Howard University in 1961, where he heard lectures by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Patrice Lumumba and Walter White.

After graduating from Howard University in 1961, King married Gwendolyn Stewart King, on July 3, 1961. He then served as a commissioned officer in the U.S. Army's Adjutant General's Corps from 1961 to 1963. After a brief time with the U.S. Civil Service Commission, he served as a special agent for the U.S. State Department but quit because of his disagreement with the Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO). In 1970, King, on a fellowship with James Farmer at Health Education and Welfare, called attention to sickle-cell anemia and the unequal attention given to minority health care. From 1971 to 1972, he worked for Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), an anti-poverty program created by President Lyndon B. Johnson. King then drafted the District of Columbia Home Rule Act of 1973, which effectively combined Washington D.C. and areas like Georgetown, and the Conflict of Interests Bill. In 1975, King left government service, but returned in 1976 as Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Department. In 1979, President Jimmy Carter appointed King as the United States Executive of the World Bank. In this position, King successfully helped Robert McNamara include the People's Republic of China in the World Bank. King left in 1980 to become executive vice president of the Middle East and Africa divisions at Riggs National Bank. At Riggs National Bank, King was concerned with federal financial services, international banking and third world indebtedness. In 1990, King joined the editorial board of the *Washington Post* in Washington D.C. He started writing a weekly column in 1995 and in 2000, King was appointed deputy editor of the *Washington Post* editorial page. He retired in 2007.

In 2003, King received the Pulitzer Prize for his columns, which often challenged racial discrimination and religious fundamentalism, critiqued the criminal justice system, and spoke out against the exploitation of the poor.

King lives in Washington D.C. with his wife, Gwendolyn. His son, Rob King, served as the editor-in-chief of ESPN Digital Media.

Colbert I. King was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on May 4, 2005 and October 4, 2022.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Colbert I. King was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 4, 2005 and October 4, 2022, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 11 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. Newspaper columnist and editor Colbert King Colbert I. King (1939 -) won the Pulitzer Prize for Commentary in 2003 for his work with The Washington Post. He also served as deputy assistant secretary of the U.S. Treasury Department and U.S. executive director of the World Bank.

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:

King, Colbert

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Minor, Rodney (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
King, Colbert--Interviews

African American journalists--Interviews

African American journalists--Washington (D.C.)--Interviews

African American civil rights workers--Washington (D.C.)--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Washington Post Company

Washington Post Company

Occupations:

Newspaper Editor

Newspaper Columnist

HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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 Colbert I. King, May 4, 2005 and October 4, 2022.
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 Colbert I. King, Section A2005_118_001_001, TRT: 0:29:11 ?

Colbert I. King was born on September 20, 1939 in Washington, D.C. to Amelia Colbert King and Isaiah King III. His mother's ancestors were enslaved by the Colbert family in Culpeper, Virginia. Although some of the enslaved family members were sold away, they were able to reunite sometime around the Civil War. King recounts how the slaves stole sugar from their owners and how some of his ancestors may have moved to Liberia under the American Colonization Society. King's paternal great-grandfather served in the 5th Regiment Massachusetts Colored Volunteer Cavalry during the Civil War, became a whaler and travelled to Newfoundland, Canada. King's mother was born in 1918 in Takoma Park, Maryland, before her family settled in D.C. King's father was born in 1918 in New Bedford, Massachusetts. King's parents both attended Thaddeus Stevens Elementary School in D.C. While his mother eventually earned her master's degree in early childhood education and was a teacher, King's father dropped out after the tenth grade.

Slavery--Virginia.

United States--History--Civil War, 1861-1865--Participation, African American.

African American families--Washington (D.C.).

African Americans--Educations (Elementary)--Washington (D.C.).

African American children--Washington (D.C.).

African American journalists--Washington (D.C.).

Dash, Leon.

Video Oral History Interview with Colbert I. King, Section A2005_118_001_002, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Colbert I. King's parents, Isiah King III and Amelia Colbert King, grew up in the Foggy Bottom neighborhood of Washington, D.C., the same neighborhood where King and his older sister and younger brother were raised. King's father was a construction laborer and a clerk for the U.S. Department of Commerce. King remembers the sight of military uniforms during the various wars that occurred during his childhood, and the smell of gladiolas at funerals. He often visited his paternal grandparents' home and learned numbers and mathematics from watching his grandfather bet on horses. Growing up in Foggy Bottom, King was surrounded mainly by a working-class community that included a small number of professionals. When King began attending Paul Laurence Dunbar High School, he encountered prejudice from some of his more affluent

classmates. King and his family belonged to Liberty Baptist Church, where King served as a junior deacon. King reflects upon the diminished role of the church in the African American community.

African American families--Washington (D.C.).

African Americans--Education (Secondary)--Washington (D.C.).

African American Baptists--Washington (D.C.).

African American churches.

Horse racing--Betting.

Video Oral History Interview with Colbert I. King, Section A2005_118_001_003, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Colbert I. King attended Thaddeus Stevens Elementary School in Washington, D.C., where he learned African American history and proper social conduct. King remembers the composer Noble Sissle visiting his elementary school to perform 'I'm Just Wild About Harry' before President Harry Truman's inauguration, and his sixth grade teacher, Mr. King, being teased by students at Francis Junior High School. At Paul Laurence Dunbar High School, King joined junior ROTC and was influenced by William Rumsey, the assistant professor of military science. Rumsey emphasized military drills as well as lessons in how to dress, treat women, and respect others; and, he once took the students on a field trip to a recently desegregated downtown restaurant. King was a member of the Latin Club and Glee Club. Despite his involvement as a student, King initially felt excluded by some teachers and more affluent peers because of his blue-collar background.

African Americans--Education (Primary)--Washington (D.C.).

African Americans--Education (Secondary)--Washington (D.C.).

Dunbar High School (Washington, D.C.).

Social classes--Washington (D.C.).

Video Oral History Interview with Colbert I. King, Section A2005_118_001_004, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Colbert I. King attended Howard University in Washington, D.C. At Howard, King majored in government, encountered new perspectives while meeting students from different areas of the U.S. and the Caribbean and was influenced by his professors, Bernard Fall and Robert Martin. His favorite professor, Emmett Dorsey, was called before the United States House of Un-American Activities Committee. Aside from on-campus demonstrations, Howard University was not as politically active as it would be a few years later when Diane Nash and Stokely Carmichael became upperclassmen. King joined ROTC and became a commissioned officer in the U.S. Army. He also met his wife, Gwendolyn Stewart King, and discovered his love of writing while composing essays about his hometown neighborhood of Foggy Bottom and Lyndon Baines Johnson's impact as majority leader in the U.S. Senate. Although King became more active in the Civil Rights Movement after he left Howard University, he participated in discussions of civil rights activities.

African American universities and colleges.

Howard University.

African Americans--Education (Higher).

United States. Army. Reserve Officers Training Corps.

Video Oral History Interview with Colbert I. King, Section A2005_118_001_005, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Colbert I. King attended speeches given by Patrice Lumumba, Walter White and Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during their visits to Howard University. In 1961, King graduated and married his wife, Gwendolyn Stewart King. From

1961 to 1963, he served in the U.S. Army. He then worked for the U.S. Department of State and was an attaché at the American embassy in Bonn, Germany. He left the State Department due to its implementation of COINTELPRO. In 1970, King and James Farmer received a fellowship from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Human Services to research sickle cell anemia and minority health care. After a brief stint at the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, King worked for the VISTA program under HistoryMaker Constance Berry Newman, where he instituted a policy of hiring half the workers from communities being served rather than recruiting mainly college students. King was named U.S. executive director of the World Bank under the Carter Administration in 1979.

King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968.

White, Walter Francis, 1893-1955.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People--Washington (D.C.).

United States. Army--African American officers.

World Bank--China.

World Bank--Employment.

Video Oral History Interview with Colbert I. King, Section A2005_118_001_006, TRT: 0:29:11 ?

Colbert I. King handled negotiations for the People's Republic of China to join the World Bank. The controversy surrounding this event led to an argument between King and World Bank President Robert McNamara. When the World Bank's policies changed under the Reagan Administration, King left to serve as vice president of the Middle East and Africa sector for Riggs Bank. During the Third World Debt Crisis, King worked to sell and negotiate loans made to poorer countries. King rose to senior vice president and joined the board of directors. When King no longer had to pay for his children's college tuition, he left Riggs Bank to pursue his interest in writing. He joined the editorial staff of The Washington Post in 1990. In 1995, he began writing a Saturday column for the paper. As a columnist, he focused on issues impacting the African American community, such as Pat Robertson mining gold in Liberia and violence in the African American community. King often used his column to criticize religious hypocrisy.

World Bank--China.

African Americans--Washington (D.C.)--Newspapers.

Liberia.

African American journalists.

African Americans--Banks and banking.

World Bank--Employment.

Video Oral History Interview with Colbert I. King, Section A2005_118_002_007, TRT: 7:31:36 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Colbert I. King, Section A2005_118_002_008, TRT: 8:38:14 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Colbert I. King, Section A2005_118_002_009, TRT: 9:32:07 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Colbert I. King, Section A2005_118_002_010, TRT: 10:46:41 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Colbert I. King, Section A2005_118_002_011, TRT: 11:15:59 ?