

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Louis Carr

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Carr, Louis, 1956-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Louis Carr,
Dates:	December 11, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:22:15).
Abstract:	Media executive Louis Carr (1956 -) was President of Advertising and Sales for BET. Carr was also the CEO and president of TV, LLC, a real estate company that owns and manages multi-family apartment buildings in Chicago, and chairman of the Louis Carr Internship Foundation. Carr was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 11, 2006, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_160
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Black Entertainment Television's (BET) president of media sales Louis Carr was born May 3, 1956, in Chicago, Illinois. His parents, Lillian Cheers Carr and boxing trainer Lewis Carr were members of the Nation of Islam (NOI). Carr attended Muhammad's University of Islam, Bidler Elementary School, and J. Sterling Morton Junior High School, and graduated from Lane Technical High School in 1974. A high school track star, Carr was part of a world record-breaking mile relay team, despite a severe hamstring injury. Attending Drake University on a four-year track scholarship, Carr graduated with his B.A. degree in broadcast journalism in 1978.

Carr worked as a customer service representative for Bankers Life Insurance Company until 1980, when he joined New York Life Insurance Company. In 1984, Carr joined Johnson Publishing Company as a salesman. Soon after, Carr was invited to work for *Black Enterprise* magazine in 1985. Carr was recruited to work at BET. Carr worked to convince sponsors of the viability of the African American market. Carr is president of media sales for BET and is responsible for the strategic planning to generate revenue for BET, the company's flagship; BET J, their flanker network for a mature audience, and BET.com.

Carr is also CEO and president of TV, LLC, (Tweetie Ventures) which is a real estate company that owns and manages multi-family apartment buildings in Chicago. Additionally, he is chairman of the Louis Carr Internship Foundation, which provides paid internships for students of color. Carr serves on the Board of Directors of The Advertising Council, the American Advertising Federation, the Cable Advertising Bureau and Boys Hope Girls Hope.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Louis Carr was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 11, 2006, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Media executive Louis Carr (1956 -) was President of Advertising and Sales for BET. Carr was also the CEO and president of TV, LLC, a real estate company that owns and manages multi-family apartment buildings in Chicago, and chairman of the Louis Carr Internship Foundation.

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:

Carr, Louis, 1956-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Carr, Louis, 1956---Interviews

African American executives--Interviews

Marketing executives--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Media Executive

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 Louis Carr, December 11, 2006. 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 Louis Carr, Section A2006_160_001_001, TRT: 0:28:42 ?

Louis Carr was born on May 3, 1956 in Chicago, Illinois to Lillian Cheers and L.A. Carr. Carr's maternal grandparents, James Cheers and Hattie Cheers, lived in Hickman, Kentucky, where they were farmers with little formal education. Carr's mother, Lillian Cheers, was born in Hickman in 1939. They moved to Chicago, where Carr's grandfather worked on the railroad, and his grandmother

became a hairdresser. His mother worked as a clerk for the city's Department of Streets and Sanitation, and was active in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Carr's father was born in 1936 in Jackson, Mississippi, and won a Golden Gloves featherweight boxing championship in the mid-1960s. Carr's father was entrepreneurial, and worked as a janitor at Chicago's Muhammad University of Islam. Carr recalls his childhood in Chicago's Garfield Park neighborhood; his father's imprisonment during the 1970s; and the influence of the Nation of Islam on his early education.

African American executives--Interviews.

Marketing executives--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Louis Carr, Section A2006_160_001_002, TRT: 0:28:44 ?

Louis Carr was taught the ethics of the Nation of Islam, and sold Muhammad Speaks newspapers on street corners as a child. He attended grade school at Muhammad University of Islam, where his teachers included Malcolm X, Minister Louis Farrakhan and Elijah Muhammad. The school closed after the assassination of Malcolm X in 1965, and Carr's mother enrolled him at Beidler Elementary School, where he had trouble adjusting to the public school environment. Carr went on to attend J. Sterling Morton High School, where he was subjected to gang culture. Carr lived on Chicago's West Side at the time of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, and describes the riots that followed. At his teachers' urging, Carr passed the entrance exam to the prestigious, majority white Albert Grannis Lane Technical High School. There, he became an All-American athlete, and set the high school mile relay world record. Carr graduated with the school's first co-educational class in 1974.

Video Oral History Interview with Louis Carr, Section A2006_160_001_003, TRT: 0:29:25 ?

Louis Carr was a track star at Lane Technical High School, and he set the world record for the mile relay in 1974. He sustained a severe hamstring injury, but recovered and obtained a four-year athletic scholarship to Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. He majored in broadcast journalism, aspiring to become a television anchor. After graduating in 1978, Carr worked for six years as an insurance agent, first at Bankers Life Insurance Company, then for New York Life Insurance Company. In 1984, Carr obtained a position at John H. Johnson's Johnson Publishing Company, selling advertisements for Ebony magazine. Carr left the company after a year and a half, and then worked briefly for Earl Graves. In 1986, he was recruited to join Robert L. Johnson's newly founded company, Black Entertainment Television (BET). Carr attributes his lucrative salesmanship and the eventual success of BET to his excellent work ethic.

Video Oral History Interview with Louis Carr, Section A2006_160_001_004, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Louis Carr helped build the brand of Black Entertainment Television (BET), and explains how the emotional connection between the company and the African American community was forged. Carr helped to recruit BET's initial advertisers, like Anheuser-Busch Companies and Procter and Gamble Company. He pursued deals with companies that were under pressure to increase diversity from Reverend Jesse L. Jackson and Operation PUSH. As an advertising executive, Carr also contributed to BET's programming decisions. BET initially drew viewers through its music programs, airing videos by African American artists who were not shown on MTV, such as Michael Jackson, Whitney Houston and Bobby Brown. He describes the company's accomplishments, including the BET Awards; its target demographic; and its responsibility to the black community. Carr goes on to address concerns about the Viacom's acquisition of BET in 2001. He predicts that the company will continue to grow financially and to support the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Louis Carr, Section A2006_160_001_005, TRT: 0:26:04 ?

Louis Carr established the Louis Carr Internship Foundation to expose young people to careers in the entertainment industry. He describes the organization as his legacy, and talks about the lack of diversity in the media industry, and Black Entertainment Television's mission to incorporate young African American talent. Carr remembers lessons he learned from his mentors, including Earl G. Graves, Sr., John H. Johnson, and Robert L. Johnson. Additionally, Carr describes the evolution of his faith, and the influence of God upon his life. He was a member of Bishop Arthur Brazier's Apostolic Church of God in Chicago, Illinois. Carr talks about his wife, Diane Carr, and her support and service to her community. Carr reflects upon his hopes for the African American community, his life and how he would like to be remembered.