

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ovie Carter

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Carter, Ovie
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ovie Carter,
Dates:	May 26, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:28:59).
Abstract:	Photojournalist Ovie Carter (1946 -) is a Pulitzer Prize winning photojournalist, recognized for his reporting on famine in Africa and India. He worked at The Chicago Tribune for thirty-four years. Carter was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 26, 2010, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_035
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Photojournalist Ovie Carter was born on March 11, 1946 in Indianola, Mississippi to Grover and Mary Carter. Carter grew up in several different cities and attended Douglass High School in Memphis, Tennessee and John Marshall High School in Chicago, Illinois before graduating from Soldan High School in St. Louis, Missouri in 1964. He went on to attend Forest Park Community College. Carter served with the U.S. Air Force and upon his discharge; Carter attended the Ray Vogue School of Photography, now the Illinois Institute of Art. Directly after graduation, Carter was hired to work at *The Chicago Tribune*.

In 1974, Carter traveled for nearly three months through African and India with fellow *Chicago Tribune* reporter William Mullen documenting the famine affecting almost half a billion people. Their journey, entitled *Faces of Hunger*, appeared in *The Chicago Tribune* as a five-part series and won the 1975 Pulitzer Prize in international reporting. Photos from the series also won Carter the World Press Photo Contest in Amsterdam and the Overseas Press Club of America Award. In 1992, Mitch Duneier and Carter published the book *Slim's Table*, based on Duneier's Ph.D. dissertation. The two paired up again to publish *Sidewalk* in 2000 before Carter's retirement in 2004.

Carter was named the Illinois Press Photographers Association's Photographer of the Year in 1973-1974 and he has won the National Association of Black Journalists Excellence Award twice. In 2000, *The Chicago Tribune* honored Carter at their annual banquet for his thirty years of service. Carter also received the National Association of Black Journalists "Legends in Their Own Time" Distinguished Career award in 2004. Carter is a member of the Chicago Alliance of African American Photographers.

Ovie Carter was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 26, 2010.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Ovie Carter was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 26, 2010, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Photojournalist Ovie Carter (1946 -) is a Pulitzer Prize winning photojournalist, recognized for his reporting on famine in Africa and India. He worked at The Chicago Tribune for thirty-four years.

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:

Carter, Ovie

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Carter, Ovie--Interviews

African American photographers--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

The Chicago Tribune

Occupations:

Photojournalist

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 Ovie Carter, May 26, 2010. 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 Ovie Carter, Section A2010_035_001_001, TRT: 0:30:29 ?

Ovie Carter describes his family's history. His mother, Mary Collins, was born in Indianola, Mississippi in May of 1920, as the youngest child of Agnes and Dave Collins. Carter talks about his grandparents, his mother's growing up in Indianola, and his maternal great-grandparents who were slaves. His father,

Grover Cleveland Carter, Sr., was born in Mississippi in April of 1917, and became a farmer, initially working as a sharecropper in Indianola. Carter's parents met and married as teenagers, and raised eleven children in Indianola, Memphis, Tennessee and later in Chicago, Illinois. He also talks about his siblings, his parents' personalities, his likeness to them, and his earliest childhood memories of growing up in Indianola.

African American families.

African American mothers.

African American fathers.

Brothers and sisters.

Childhood and youth--Mississippi--Indianola.

Video Oral History Interview with Ovie Carter, Section A2010_035_001_002, TRT: 0:31:43 ?

Ovie Carter was born in Indianola, Mississippi. He describes his childhood there, and his neighborhood of Bates Addition. Carter talks about growing up during segregation in Mississippi, the unwritten social norms and race relations, and Emmett Till's murder in 1955. He also talks about two studies on race relations in his hometown that were published by researchers at Harvard University. Carter began school at Carver Elementary School, where he studied until the sixth grade. He talks about his disappointing experience in school, and his having to leave school several times a year to help his family earn a living on the cotton farms. Owing to the loss of farm jobs during the industrialization of farming in the 1950s, Carter's family moved to Memphis, Tennessee around 1957. Carter talks about blues musicians from the Mississippi Delta, including B.B. King, and the music scene in Indianola.

Childhood and youth--Mississippi--Indianola.

African American neighborhoods--Mississippi--Indianola.

Race relations--Mississippi--Indianola.

Till, Emmett, 1941-1955.

African Americans--Education, Elementary.

Rural-urban migration--United States.

Blues musicians.

Video Oral History Interview with Ovie Carter, Section A2010_035_001_003, TRT: 0:34:33 ?

Ovie Carter spent his early childhood in Indianola, Mississippi, where he recalls the Saturday night music scene, his family's acquaintance with Riley "B.B" King, his own interest in blues music, and the role of church in community life. When his family moved to Memphis, Tennessee in the late 1950s, he began to attend Hyde Park School, where his grades improved. A few years later, in 1959, his family moved to Chicago, Illinois, where Carter attended John Marshall High School. He also talks about how he injured his knees as a child, which kept him from playing organized sports in school. He describes his culture shock he experienced in Chicago, and moving to St. Louis, Missouri, where his older brother found him a job. In 1964, Carter completed his high school education at Frank Solden School in St. Louis, and attended college briefly, before dropping out to join the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War.

Childhood and youth--Mississippi--Indianola.

Blues (Music)--Mississippi--Indianola.

African American churches--Mississippi--Indianola.

African Americans--Education, Secondary.

Relocation (Housing).

United States--Armed Forces--African Americans.

Video Oral History Interview with Ovie Carter, Section A2010_035_001_004, TRT: 0:29:21 ?

Ovie Carter joined the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War, and served for nine months. While in the military, he attended basic training, received surgery on his knees, and became interested in reading books. Following his discharge from the Air Force on health-related grounds, Carter wanted to move to New York City to pursue a career in theatre. He decided to temporarily live in Chicago, Illinois, to help his family take care of his younger siblings. While in Chicago in the late 1960s, Carter attended the Ray-Vogue School to study photography. In April of 1968, shortly after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, he was interviewed to become a photojournalist at the Chicago Tribune. Carter recalls the riots in Chicago in the aftermath of Dr. King's assassination, how he was hired as the first black photographer at the Chicago Tribune, his positive experience there, the black colleagues on the editorial team, meeting his future wife, and his decision to stay in Chicago.

United States--Armed Forces--African Americans.

African American families--Illinois--Chicago.

Photography--Study and teaching.

Chicago Tribune (Firm).

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

Photojournalism.

Video Oral History Interview with Ovie Carter, Section A2010_035_001_005, TRT: 0:29:29 ?

Ovie Carter was hired as the first African American photographer at the 'Chicago Tribune' in 1968. He describes the highlights of his assignments at the Tribune in the 1960s and 1970s, his photojournalistic illustrations of drug abuse in the West Side of Chicago, Illinois, in the 1970s, his multimedia exhibit entitled 'I Am Somebody', that depicted the life of African Americans in Chicago, photographing famine and hunger in India and across Africa in 1974, and his collaboration with fellow photographers in 1974, on an exhibit entitled 'Through the Eyes of Blackness'. He also talks about the reputation of the 'Chicago Tribune', contemporary black photographers whom he admired and respected, and his own photographic equipment. In 1972, Carter was named the Illinois Press Photographers Association's "Photographer of the Year."

Photojournalism.

Chicago Tribune (Firm).

Photojournalists--African American.

Illinois Press Photographers Association--Awards.

Famines.

Video Oral History Interview with Ovie Carter, Section A2010_035_001_006, TRT: 0:30:31 ?

Ovie Carter and his colleague, William Mullen of the 'Chicago Tribune', won the Pulitzer Prize in International Reporting in 1975 for their series entitled 'The Faces of Hunger', providing coverage of famine and hunger in India and across Africa. In 1976, he won the top prize in the World Press Photo Contest in Amsterdam, Holland, for a picture from the same series. Carter talks about traveling across the U.S. to assess the state of Native Americans in 1976, reporting from the southern U.S., and recognizing the changes in race relations there in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and working with sociologist Mitchell Duneier to provide photographs for his books, 'Slim's Table' and 'Sidewalk'. He also talks about his divorce and his spiritual experience thereafter. Carter reflects upon his favorite photograph of a bridge over the Niger River, in

Niamey, Niger, himself as a photographer, adapting to digital photography, and his career.

Famines.

Duneier, Mitchell.

Race relations--Southern States.

Native Americans.

Photography--Technique.

Photojournalism.

Video Oral History Interview with Ovie Carter, Section A2010_035_001_007, TRT: 0:22:53 ?

Ovie Carter reflects upon his hopes and concerns for the African American community, the importance of a close-knit African American community of journalists, his eyesight, his legacy, and how he would like to be remembered. He also talks about his sons, his grandchildren, and his parents' pride in his career as a photographer. Carter ends the interview by describing photographs from his life and those that he has shot over the course of his career as a Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist.

Photojournalists--African American.

African American families.

Photographs.