

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Carl Snowden

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Snowden, Carl, 1953-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Carl Snowden,
Dates:	December 9, 2011
Bulk Dates:	2011
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:10:14).
Abstract:	Civil rights activist and city government official The Honorable Carl Snowden (1953 -) was the director of the civil rights division in the Maryland Attorney General's Office and served as a city councilman of Annapolis, Maryland. Snowden was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 9, 2011, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2011_038
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civil rights activist and politician Carl Snowden was born on June 17, 1953, to Ora and William Snowden, in Baltimore, Maryland, and was raised in Annapolis, Maryland, where he attended Annapolis Elementary School. As a student, Snowden was greatly influenced by *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. In 1970, Snowden, along with fourteen other students, were expelled from Annapolis High School after they boycotted classes to protest the school's lack of African American teachers and African American studies courses. Local benefactors raised funds for him to attend the private Key School. While still a young adult, Snowden organized an African American group called VOTE.

1976, Snowden successfully sued the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for illegally spying on him through the COINTELPRO program, which was established by the FBI to keep activists under surveillance. Snowden was kept under surveillance by the FBI from the age of 16 until 24. Snowden was awarded \$10,000 and the FBI was required to expunge his files. Snowden received his M.A. degree in human services from Lincoln University in 1985.

In 1982, Snowden founded Carl Snowden & Associates, a private civil rights firm that specialized in civil rights issues. After building a reputation as a leading civil rights activist, Snowden was elected to serve as representative for the majority black Fifth Ward on the Annapolis City Council in 1985. As alderman, Snowden introduced landmark legislation that prohibited private clubs from discriminating against people based on their race, color, gender, and national origin; and also passed legislation prohibiting stalking and sexual harassment. Snowden then spearheaded the removal of Arthur G. Strissel, Jr. from the position of executive director of the Annapolis Housing Authority after he was charged and convicted of bribery and fraud. In 1988, Snowden founded the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Committee, Inc., which hosts an annual Awards Dinner honoring people who, through their deeds, words, and actions, help to keep Dr. King's legacy alive. Following Snowden's unsuccessful run for mayor of the City of Annapolis, Snowden worked for Governor Parris N. Glendening as an administrator in the Maryland

Department of Juvenile Services and as the president for the Anne Arundel County Economic Opportunity Committee. In 2007, the State of Maryland Attorney General Douglas F. Gansler appointed Snowden as the first Director of the Civil Rights Program. While there, Snowden campaigned for civil rights for all people and led an investigation into the Annapolis Housing Authority's banning practices.

Snowden has campaigned for numerous local candidates, including Janet S. Owens, the first woman elected as county executive in Anne Arundel County, Maryland; and Annapolis Mayor Josh Cohen. Snowden, who spearheaded a successful two-year \$800 thousand capital fund campaign to create the first Coretta Scott King Memorial Garden and the first Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in the State of Maryland. Snowden was honored with an award at the 23rd Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Awards Dinner in Glen Burnie, Maryland in 2011.

Carl Snowden was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on December 9, 2011.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Carl Snowden was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on December 9, 2011, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Civil rights activist and city government official The Honorable Carl Snowden (1953 -) was the director of the civil rights division in the Maryland Attorney General's Office and served as a city councilman of Annapolis, Maryland.

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:

Snowden, Carl, 1953-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Snowden, Carl, 1953- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Maryland. Offices of the Attorney General

Occupations:

Civil Rights Activist

City Government Official

HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers|PoliticalMakers

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 Carl Snowden, December 9, 2011. 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 Carl Snowden, Section A2011_038_001_001, TRT: 1:31:23 ?

The Honorable Carl Snowden was born on June 17, 1953 in Baltimore, Maryland to Ora Brown Snowden and William Snowden. His maternal grandmother died during childbirth, and his mother was raised by her father, Reverend John Brown, who owned a farm in Davidsonville, Maryland. Snowden's father was also born in Maryland to Eugene Snowden and Emma Snowden. He lost an eye while working with explosives as a young man, but nonetheless served as a skilled sharpshooter for the U.S. Army during World War II. Snowden's father went on to become a butcher, and raised twelve children with Snowden's mother. Snowden was the second youngest of their children, and grew up on his maternal grandfather's farm in Davidsonville. There, he first recalls experiencing racism at six years old, when he witnessed the mistreatment of a friend's father by his white employer. Later, Snowden moved with his family to Annapolis, Maryland, where his mother worked as a domestic.

Video Oral History Interview with Carl Snowden, Section A2011_038_001_002, TRT: 2:35:23 ?

The Honorable Carl Snowden and his family moved to Annapolis, Maryland after his maternal grandfather's death in 1960, and he transferred from the rural, all-black George Washington Carver Elementary School to the integrated Annapolis Elementary School. Following Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, Snowden and his peers voiced their reactions on WANN Radio, which catered to black listeners and featured Hoppy Adams, the first African American on-air personality. Snowden worked there as an Annapolis Junior High School student. He read 'The Autobiography of Malcolm X' while a student at Annapolis High School; and, noticing the lack of African American teachers and black history courses at the school, led a boycott of classes. On the eighth day of the protest, the mayor and local NAACP sought to quell the demonstration, but the boycott resumed two weeks later, and Snowden was expelled. In response, a group of citizens paid for Snowden and the other expelled students to attend the private Key School.

Video Oral History Interview with Carl Snowden, Section A2011_038_001_003, TRT: 3:33:01 ?

The Honorable Carl Snowden attended the Key School, a predominantly white college preparatory school in Annapolis, Maryland. After class, he hosted a program on WANN Radio, where he interviewed figures such as James Baldwin, Minister Louis Farrakhan and Alex Haley. After graduating from Howard University in Washington, D.C., Snowden became the director of youth development at Maryland's Community Action Agency. He had his first son at twenty-four years old, and briefly attended the University of the District of Columbia. After learning about the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) files on local activists, Snowden sued the bureau, gained access to his file and used it to inform the public about government surveillance. Next, he helped found the

Poor People's Rights Organization, which led an eighteen-month rent strike in 1976. Snowden earned a master's degree from Lincoln University, and later left the Community Action Agency in order to found Carl Snowden and Associates, a civil rights consultancy.

Video Oral History Interview with Carl Snowden, Section A2011_038_001_004, TRT: 4:36:30 ?

The Honorable Carl Snowden was a participant on the crossfire debate television show 'Square Off' from 1978. The publicity helped launch Carl Snowden and Associates, which was founded in 1983. Recognizing the underrepresentation of African Americans in the government of Annapolis, Maryland, Snowden partnered with attorney Alan Legum, and successfully sued the city for violating the Voting Rights Act. The City of Annapolis then created a majority African American district, which elected Snowden as its councilman. During the anti-apartheid movement, Snowden advocated for the city's divestment from South Africa. The South African government invited Snowden and Mayor Dennis Callahan to Johannesburg, hoping to deter them from divestment; but, through Snowden's connections with Trans Africa, he met with regular South Africans, who told him of apartheid's injustices. Upon his return, Snowden passed the divestment legislation, as well as a bill that prohibited private clubs from discriminating in their membership.

Video Oral History Interview with Carl Snowden, Section A2011_038_001_005, TRT: 5:34:01 ?

The Honorable Carl Snowden was elected to the Annapolis City Council in 1985. In this role, he successfully advocated for the posthumous pardon of John Snowden, who was wrongfully executed for a crime he did not commit. Snowden also created a memorial in Annapolis for Maryland's lynching victims. Prior to the creation of the national holiday honoring Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Snowden organized a dinner in his memory, and pushed for memorials to Dr. King and Coretta Scott King in Anne Arundel County, Maryland. After twelve years on city council, Snowden decided to run for mayor in 1997, and lost by only 155 votes. Instead, he joined the Department of Juvenile Justice under Maryland Governor Parris Glendening. Next, Snowden served eight years on the cabinet of county executive Janet S. Owens. When Doug Gansler was elected as the state attorney general in 2006, he recruited Snowden to direct the office's new civil rights division. Snowden also talks about the political history of Annapolis, Maryland.

Video Oral History Interview with Carl Snowden, Section A2011_038_001_006, TRT: 6:19:56 ?

The Honorable Carl Snowden was the chairman of the board of commissioners for the Housing Authority of the City of Annapolis, Maryland. In this role, he aimed to make public housing into a transitional service, rather than a permanent form of residence. Snowden describes his hopes for public housing in Annapolis, and for economic development in the African American community. He also talks about the progress of African Americans since the era of slavery, and describes his hopes and concerns for the black community at large. Snowden concludes the interview by reflecting upon his family, legacy and how he would like to be remembered.