

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Juan Williams

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Williams, Juan
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Juan Williams,
Dates:	June 15, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012
Physical Description:	8 uncompressed MOV digital video files (4:01:38).
Abstract:	Newspaper columnist, radio personality, and television commentator Juan Williams (1954 -) is one of the most prominent African-American journalists on television, having appeared on Fox News Channel and award-winning Public Broadcasting System (PBS) documentaries. Williams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 15, 2012, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_061
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Television personality and news journalist Juan Williams was born to Rogelio and Alma Geraldine Williams on April 10, 1954 in Colon, Panama. At the age of four, Williams and his family moved to Brooklyn, New York. In 1969, Williams won a scholarship to attend the Oakwood Friends School in Poughkeepsie, New York, a Quaker school. Williams then attended Haverford College, where he graduated with a B.A. degree in philosophy in 1976.

After interning at the *Washington Post*, Williams was hired by the newspaper in 1979. He worked as an editorial writer, op-ed columnist and White House reporter in 23 years at the Washington, D.C. newspaper. Williams published his first book, *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years (1954-1965)* in 1987, the best-selling companion to the award winning documentary of the same name. Williams was then hired by Fox News Channel in 1997 as a contributor. A year later, his second book, *Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary*, about the pioneering Supreme Court justice, was published. It was designated a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year. After serving as co-host of the television news program *America's Black Forum*, Williams was hired as host of the National Public Radio call-in program *Talk of the Nation* in 2000. He wrote his third book, *This Far by Faith: Stories from the African American Religious Experience*, a companion to the critically acclaimed Public Broadcasting System documentary. Williams then wrote *My Soul Looks Back in Wonder: Voices of the Civil Rights Experience* and *Enough: The Phony Leaders, Dead-End Movements, and Culture of Failure That Are Undermining Black America--and What We Can Do About It*; the former was co-written with Pulitzer-prize winning author David Halberstam and published in 2005, and the latter was published two years later. Williams has authored six books in total. He is also the recipient of several awards for his writing and investigative journalism, he won an Emmy Award for television documentary writing and received widespread critical acclaim for numerous projects, including a series of documentaries like *Politics: The New Black Power* and *A. Phillip Randolph: For Jobs and Freedom*. Williams has also written numerous articles for national magazines including *TIME*, *Fortune*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The New Republic*, *Ebony* and *GQ*.

Juan Williams was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on March 6, 2012.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Juan Williams was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 15, 2012, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 8 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Newspaper columnist, radio personality, and television commentator Juan Williams (1954 -) is one of the most prominent African-American journalists on television, having appeared on Fox News Channel and award-winning Public Broadcasting System (PBS) documentaries.

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:

Williams, Juan

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Williams, Juan--Interviews

African American journalists--Interviews.

African American authors--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Washington Post Company

National Public Radio (U.S.)

Fox News

Occupations:

Newspaper Columnist

Radio Personality

Television Commentator

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 Juan Williams, June 15, 2012. 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 Juan Williams, Section A2012_061_001_001, TRT: 1:29:50 ?

Juan Williams slates the interview and lists his favorites. He talks about his mother's and father's family backgrounds in Panama, his father's occupations as a boxer and boxing trainer, and eventually as an accountant in New York, New York. Williams and his mother moved to New York five years before his father, and he discusses what it was like to live in New York without a father. He also discusses his mother's job in a sweatshop in Lower Manhattan, his likeness to his parents, and the story of how his parents met.

African American mothers.

African American fathers.

Sweatshops--New York (State)--New York.

Immigrant families.

Video Oral History Interview with Juan Williams, Section A2012_061_001_002, TRT: 2:30:55 ?

Juan Williams describes his earliest memory and the sights, sounds, and smells of growing up in Brooklyn, New York. He remembers the Botanical Gardens, the Brooklyn Public Library, and the apartments where his family lived. He talks about his favorite subjects and teachers in elementary school. Williams talks about his skill as a basketball player and others placing bets on basketball games. He also talks about earning a high school scholarship and leaving Brooklyn for Poughkeepsie, New York, where the community had a different ethnic makeup. He also talks about becoming the school president and the leader of many school organizations. Williams remembers the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X, as well as his father's move to New York.

Childhood and youth--New York (State)--New York.

Education, Elementary--New York (State)--New York.

Basketball.

African American leadership.

African American college students--New York--Poughkeepsie.

Video Oral History Interview with Juan Williams, Section A2012_061_001_003, TRT: 3:30:19 ?

Juan Williams talks about his family's political discussions at the Sunday dinner table, and the impact of Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on his family. He remembers going to black bookstores and movies in downtown Brooklyn, his grades in high school, and his brother's and sister's influence on his early development. Williams also discusses his mentors at Haverford College, his early writing and studies in college, and African Americans from the news media who were major influences.

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

X, Malcolm, 1925-1965--Assassination.

Brothers and sisters--New York (State)--New York.

Haverford College.

Childhood and youth--New York (State)--New York.

Mentoring in education.

Video Oral History Interview with Juan Williams, Section A2012_061_001_004, TRT: 4:29:54 ?

Juan Williams discusses his friends and mentors at Haverford College, his experiences in the philosophy department, and the role that philosophy has played in his career as a reporter in critical analysis. He talks about his internships and jobs during and after college, the racial makeup and politics of the Washington Post in 1976, and some of the stories that he wrote. Williams also discusses becoming a full-time reporter at the Washington Post, his coverage of the scandals of Mayor Marion Barry's administration, and the political and racial dynamics and culture of Washington, D.C.

Haverford College.

Mentoring in education.

Washington Post Company.

Internship programs.

Barry, Marion, 1936-.

Video Oral History Interview with Juan Williams, Section A2012_061_001_005, TRT: 5:30:03 ?

Juan Williams discusses the status of public sector jobs and public services in Washington, D.C. during Mayor Marion Barry's administration, his coverage of public schools at the Washington Post, and his opinions about U.S. Supreme Court Justices Clarence Thomas and Thurgood Marshall. He discusses the politics of appointing African Americans to the U.S. Supreme Court. Williams also talks about his biography of Thurgood Marshall, meeting Henry Hampton, and how he came to work on PBS's "Eyes on the Prize."

Washington Post Company.

Barry, Marion, 1936-

Thomas, Clarence, 1948-

Marshall, Thurgood, 1908-1993.

Hampton, Henry, 1940-1998.

Video Oral History Interview with Juan Williams, Section A2012_061_001_006, TRT: 6:28:50 ?

Juan Williams discusses writing his book 'Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years', meeting with Henry Hampton and the film crew to work on the film, and being investigated at the 'Washington Post' for supporting U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas during the scandal. Williams talks about his initial difficulty in securing an interview with Thurgood Marshall, his eventual meeting with him, and writing his book, 'Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary'. He also talks about the show, 'America's Black Forum', and how the book 'Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary' was received.

Hampton, Henry, 1940-1998.

Thomas, Clarence, 1948-

Washington Post Company.

Biographies.

Marshall, Thurgood, 1908-1993.

Video Oral History Interview with Juan Williams, Section A2012_061_001_007, TRT: 7:30:58 ?

Juan Williams talks about how Thurgood Marshall felt underappreciated as an

activist, the conflict between Carl Rowan and Thurgood Marshall, and working at Fox News and CNN. He discusses his controversial interview with Bill O'Reilly, which led to his firing from NPR, and the public reaction to that interview. He talks about how many of his comments were taken out of context in that interview, and also his general experiences at Fox News, where he is often out of step with other commentators. Williams responds to criticisms of his book, *Enough*. He describes his professional philosophy as a journalist. Williams also talks about civil rights issues, his future projects at Fox News, and reflects upon his legacy as a journalist.

Marshall, Thurgood, 1908-1993.

Cable News Network.

Fox News.

National Public Radio (U.S.).

O'Reilly, Bill.

Journalism.

Video Oral History Interview with Juan Williams, Section A2012_061_001_008, TRT: 8:30:49 ?

Juan Williams discusses the conservative orientation of Fox News, and his status there as a critical and contrarian analyst. He reflects upon his legacy and what he might do differently, his successful wife and three children, and how he would like to be remembered as one of the top journalists of his generation. Williams also describes his photographs.

Fox News.

African American families.

Photographs.