

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Charles Hobson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Hobson, Charles, 1936-2020
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Charles Hobson,
Dates:	October 23, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:30:59).
Abstract:	Television producer Charles Hobson (1936 - 2020) , founder of Vanguard Documentaries, has produced a number of television programs including <i>Like It Is</i> , <i>Harlem in Montmartre: Paris Jazz</i> , <i>Inside Bedford-Stuyvesant</i> , <i>From Jumpstreet: A Story of Black Music</i> , <i>Negroes with Guns</i> , <i>Porgy and Bess: An American Voice</i> , and <i>The Africans</i> . Hobson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 23, 2013, in Brooklyn, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_267
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Television producer Charles Hobson was born on June 23, 1936 in Brooklyn, New York to Charles Samuel and Cordelia Victoria Hobson. He grew up in the Bedford-Stuyvesant and Crown Heights neighborhoods in Brooklyn, and, in 1960, he graduated from Brooklyn College. From 1962 to 1963, Hobson served in the United States Army as a private first class.

In 1963, Hobson was hired to host a radio show at WBAI, New York's Pacifica station. He went on to be promoted to production director at WBAI, where he produced a variety of programs until 1967. Hobson was then hired as a producer for ABC-TV, WABC-TV in New York, and WETA-TV in Washington D.C. In 1968, he produced the television programs *Inside Bedford-Stuyvesant* and *Like It Is*, which won seven New York-area Emmy Awards. After attending Emory University from 1974 to 1976, Hobson was promoted to senior vice president of WETA and became a consultant for the National Endowment for the Arts. In 1980, he produced the PBS series *From Jumpstreet: A Story of Black Music*, and, in 1986, he was the producer of the nine-part series *The Africans*. In 1988, Hobson was hired as a consultant for the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation. The following year, in 1989, he was hired as the director of market planning for WNET-TV. Hobson also worked on the six-part series *Global Links*, and the science series *Spaces*.

In the 1980s, Hobson launched the production company Vanguard Documentaries, where he served as executive producer and artistic head. Vanguard has produced a number of documentaries and shows since its inception, including *Porgy and Bess: An American Voice*, *Model U.N. For Everyone*, *Global Classrooms*, *Negroes with Guns*, and *Harlem in Montmartre: Paris Jazz*. Hobson has also lectured at several schools including Harvard University, Yale University, Vassar College, the State University of New York, and New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. In 1996, he became a Fulbright Scholar and taught film in Munich, Germany.

Hobson has received multiple awards for his work in film. He has been awarded an Emmy, the Japan Prize ‘Special Citation,’ and the Golden Eagle Award from the Council on International Nontheatrical Events. *Millimeter* magazine has ranked Hobson as one of the fifty top producers in the film and television industry, and, in 2010, he was named a Black Media Legend by the McDonald’s Corporation. Hobson has served on the boards of the America the Beautiful Fund, the National Black Programming Consortium, and the Museum of Modern Art.

Hobson was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on October 23, 2013.

Hobson passed away on February 13, 2020.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Charles Hobson was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on October 23, 2013, in Brooklyn, New York, and was recorded on 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Television producer Charles Hobson (1936 - 2020), founder of Vanguard Documentaries, has produced a number of television programs including *Like It Is*, *Harlem in Montmartre: Paris Jazz*, *Inside Bedford-Stuyvesant*, *From Jumpstreet: A Story of Black Music*, *Negroes with Guns*, *Porgy and Bess: An American Voice*, and *The Africans*.

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:

Hobson, Charles, 1936-2020

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Hobson, Charles, 1936-2020 --Interviews

African American television producers and directors--New York (State)--New York--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Television Producer

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 Charles Hobson, October 23, 2013. 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 Charles Hobson, Section A2013_267_001_001, TRT: 1:30:12 ?

Charles Hobson describes his family's Jamaican background. His father, also named Charles Hobson, was born in Brownstown, Jamaica, and immigrated to America in the 1930s. Hobson's mother, Cordelia Spencer, was born to an accomplished family in Kingston, where her brother established himself as the first heart surgeon in Jamaica. Given Jamaica's colonial status, both of Hobson's parents remained proud British subjects and devout Episcopalians, even after they became American citizens. Hobson recounts his parents' decision to send him to school in Jamaica for a year to experience Jamaican family life and culture. After a year, he returned to Brooklyn where he attended a school better equipped to challenge his intellect. He details his rejection of anti-African American sentiment among his family members and explains his affinity for jazz and blues music. He remembers his childhood on Ten Downing Street in Brooklyn, and describes his early experience as a choir boy with the Concord Baptist Church.

Parents--Emigration and immigration.

African Americans--Religion.

Childhood and youth--Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.).

Education--Jamaica.

Jamaicans--New York (State)--New York.

Education--Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.).

Video Oral History Interview with Charles Hobson, Section A2013_267_001_002, TRT: 2:29:40 ?

Charles Hobson describes the formality of his Caribbean American family life. Hobson also recalls the first time he heard Bob Marley's music. Hobson attended middle school at PS3 and developed a deep interest in African American history and culture. He describes the ethnic and socioeconomic diversity on his neighborhood block in Brooklyn. Hobson then reminisces about the experience of joining the Omega Fraternity at Brooklyn College, and ultimately falling in love with jazz music and culture.

Jamaicans--Manners and customs--New York (State)--New York.

Marley, Bob.

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

Neighborhoods--Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.).

Brooklyn College.

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity.

Jazz.

Video Oral History Interview with Charles Hobson, Section A2013_267_001_003, TRT: 3:31:49 ?

Charles Hobson joined the National Guard in 1962. In 1964, Hobson was given his first music radio show on WBAI, which garnered him considerable notoriety. In 1967, he was hired as the first black producer at ABC, where he joined the Writer's Guild and produced the television program 'Like It Is.' Hobson recalls the creative tension that existed between him and the program's host, Gil Noble. In 1968, Hobson produced New York City's first African American television program entitled 'Inside Bed-Stuy,' which was conceived alongside Senator Robert Kennedy's Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Project. In 1968, 'Like It Is'

and 'Inside Bed-Stuy' garnered seven New York-area Emmy Awards.
United States--Armed Forces--African Americans.
WBAI Radio (New York, N.Y.).
Bedford-Stuyvestant (N.Y.).
American Broadcasting Companies.
Noble, Gil.

Video Oral History Interview with Charles Hobson, Section A2013_267_001_004, TRT: 4:31:50 ?

Charles Hobson describes his annulment and his subsequent marriage to Cheryl Chisholm, his second wife. From 1974 to 1976, Hobson attended graduate school at Emory University. After attending Emory, he was promoted to vice president of WETA TV and became a consultant for the National Endowment for the Arts. Hobson discusses his roles in the production of 'From Jumpstreet: A Story of Black Music' (1980) and the nine part documentary series, 'The Africans' (1986), for PBS. Hobson also describes how 'The Africans', 'Harlem in Montmartre', and 'Porgy and Bess' were conceived, and the fundraising process that made these productions possible.

Marriage--Annulment.
Emory University.
WETA-TV (Television station : Washington, D.C.).
National Endowment for the Arts.
Public Broadcasting Service (U.S.).

Video Oral History Interview with Charles Hobson, Section A2013_267_001_005, TRT: 5:27:28 ?

Charles Hobson describes his knack for fundraising. Hobson also details the major shifts in media technology and how those shifts are impacting the educational and cultural experiences of young people. In 1996, he became a Fulbright Scholar and taught in Munich, Germany, where he learned that young students are still interested in his work of the 1960s. Hobson reflects upon his desire to be remembered as a creative person who brought important and interesting stories about the African American community to the world.

Fund raising.
Technology.
Fulbright scholars--Germany--Munich.