

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Clayton Banks

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Banks, Clayton, 1960-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Clayton Banks,
Dates:	January 14, 2014
Bulk Dates:	2014
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:48:15).
Abstract:	Media executive Clayton Banks (1960 -) founded Ember Media Corp. in 1998 and served as president of NAMIC from 1996 to 1998, where he lobbied for minority-owned business incentives and increasing the number of minorities in the cable television business. Banks was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 14, 2014, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2014_005
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Media executive Clayton Banks attended California State University at Fullerton from 1980 to 1985, and graduated with his B.A. degree in speech communications and business administration. In 2000, with a scholarship from the National Cable & Telecommunication Association (NCTA) & the National Association for Multi-Ethnicity In Communications (NAMIC), Banks completed the Executive Management Program at Harvard Business School.

From 1994 to 1997, Banks served as the senior vice president of sales and marketing for Sega Channel. In 1997, he joined Comedy Central as the vice president of affiliate relations. While at Comedy Central, he was part of the launch of “South Park,” “The Daily Show with Jon Stewart,” and “The Upright Citizens Brigade.” In 1998, Banks became the regional director at Showtime Networks, and later in that year he founded Ember Media Corporation, where he has produced multimedia and broadband content for Discovery Networks, HBO, Pepsi Corp., Bloomberg TV and Showtime Networks. Between 2011 and 2013, Banks developed the “More Than A Mapp” mobile application and website that features over three-hundred African American landmarks and points of interests. He has implemented multi-platform strategies for the *Essence* Music Festival, MTV, ESPN, New York Institute of Technology and other top brands.

Banks was elected president of NAMIC from 1996 to 1998, where he championed programs such as the Patrick Mellon Mentoring Program and the NAMIC Chapter Leadership Forum. Banks served as a member of the board of directors for the Armory Track and Field Foundation, a board member for the Academy of Innovative Technology High School and is an active participant in the “Principal for a Day” program in New York City.

Clayton Banks was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 14, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Clayton Banks was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on January 14, 2014, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Media executive Clayton Banks (1960 -) founded Ember Media Corp. in 1998 and served as president of NAMIC from 1996 to 1998, where he lobbied for minority-owned business incentives and increasing the number of minorities in the cable television business.

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:

Banks, Clayton, 1960-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Banks, Clayton, 1960---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 Clayton Banks, January 14, 2014. 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 Clayton Banks, Section A2014_005_001_001, TRT: 1:36:42 ?
Clayton Banks narrates his photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Clayton Banks, Section A2014_005_001_002, TRT: 2:30:57 ?
Clayton Banks was born on August 5, 1960 in San Diego, California. Banks' paternal grandfather, William Banks, Sr., was a Baptist preacher in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Banks' mother, Georgia Banks, was born in Kinston, North Carolina in 1926 to Alvin and Geneva King. Banks describes her personality. Banks'

father served as a U.S. Marine in World War II and the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Banks' parents met at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. Banks grew up on military bases in Southern California before the family settled in Oceanside, California. In 1972, his family went on a cross-country road trip. The family attended the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal, Québec, Canada because his brother, William Banks, III, was an alternate on the United States Olympic track team. Banks and his siblings played sports as children, and his brother had a successful career as a triple jumper. Banks describes his siblings, his earliest childhood memory, his personality as a child, and the sights, sounds and smells of growing up.

Video Oral History Interview with Clayton Banks, Section A2014_005_001_003, TRT: 3:30:28 ?

Clayton Banks attended San Luis Rey Elementary School, Jefferson Junior High School, and Oceanside High School, all in Oceanside, California. Oceanside was a culturally diverse school and Banks was active in school activities. Rather than join the military like his father, Banks attended California State University-Fullerton in Fullerton, California and graduated in 1985 with a major in speech communications and business administration. At Cal State Fullerton he had his first encounter with racism, and was active in student government and the anti-apartheid movement. Banks' first job was at a small communications consulting firm. He then worked at Xerox as a sales associate. In 1988 he began working at Showtime as an affiliate representative in Los Angeles, California. In 1992, he was promoted and moved to New York City, where he worked on the campaign to launch the Movie Channel. Banks talks about mergers in the cable industry, pricing models for cable in the 1990s and competition between HBO and Showtime.

Video Oral History Interview with Clayton Banks, Section A2014_005_001_004, TRT: 4:28:59 ?

Clayton Banks began working at the Sega Channel in 1994. Sega was one of the first digital channels and it connected to the Sega Genesis gaming system. However, it was an expensive system for multiple-cable system operators to support and in 1998, the companies that owned it, TCI, Time Warner, and Sega, decided to invest in other digital platforms. At its peak, the channel reached two-hundred fifty thousand subscribers. In 1996, Banks became president of NAMIC, National Association of Minorities in Cable. Banks was introduced to NAMIC by his mentor Dennis Johnson. During his tenure, he strengthened the NAMIC chapters, established an office with a full-time staff, and strengthened the professional programs NAMIC offered. Membership grew and the organization received a regular flow of funding from corporate sponsors. Banks met many prominent figures in the cable industry through his involvement in NAMIC, such as Robert Gerrard, Jr., Nate Garner, Don Anderson and HistoryMakers Debra Lee and Douglas Holloway.

Video Oral History Interview with Clayton Banks, Section A2014_005_001_005, TRT: 5:31:47 ?

Clayton Banks became a vice president of the Eastern Region at Comedy Central in 1997. This was his first time working in basic cable and had to sell commercial space. In 1997, Comedy Central aired 'South Park,' and the success of the series transformed the network into a major player in cable television. Banks recalls meeting HistoryMaker Isaac Hayes, who was the voice of Chef on 'South Park,' at the channels' Christmas party. In 1998, Banks left Comedy Central and began his company Ember Media. The company had early success selling Digicards. Ember Media has evolved into a full-service digital strategy firm. Banks talks about the unforeseen potential of digital media development and the current state of African Americans in the telecommunications industry. Banks predicts changes cable companies will be forced to make to remain

competitive and explains the growing trend of data-driven decisions in television programming. Banks also reflects on his twenty-five year career.

Video Oral History Interview with Clayton Banks, Section A2014_005_001_006, TRT: 6:09:22 ?

Clayton Banks has one son, Joshua Banks. Banks talks about his hopes and concerns for the African American community. He also talks about his role models and mentors, both in his personal and professional life, including Dennis Johnson, an executive at Showtime, and Stanley B. Thomas Jr., the founder of the Sega Channel. Banks concludes that he would not have done anything differently in his career. He reflects upon his legacy.