

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. John W. Coleman, Sr.

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Coleman, John, 1920-2004
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. John W. Coleman, Sr.,
Dates:	July 6, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:21:23).
Abstract:	Radiologist Dr. John W. Coleman, Sr. (1920 - 2004) was a certified radiology specialist and was instrumental in a 1961 lawsuit resulting in integrated hospitals in Chicago. Coleman was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 6, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2002_099
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Dr. John William Coleman was born on December 18, 1920, in Glendale, South Carolina. Coleman was the oldest boy of four children born to Birdie O'Neal and John Henry Coleman. Coleman always wanted to be a doctor and grew up to become a radiologist who helped change Chicago's hospitals.

Cummings Street High School in Spartanburg, South Carolina, which Coleman attended, was located behind an incinerator. In spite of the unpleasant environment, Coleman excelled and graduated second in his class in 1937. He was awarded a scholarship to Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina, and earned a bachelor's degree at the age of twenty. Having learned the plastering trade from his father, Coleman decided to work as a plasterer for a year in order to save money for medical school. He was accepted to Meharry Medical School, but on December 7, 1941, the United States entered World War II. Coleman received notification that he would be drafted. However, the local draft board president was a physician, and when Coleman showed him his acceptance letter, the physician tore up the induction notice and told him to go to school.

Coleman enrolled in Meharry, but in 1943, he and his classmates were inducted into the U.S. Army. Declared part of the Army Specialized Training Program, Coleman and his classmates were sent back to school. By the time Coleman graduated, the war had ended. Coleman was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Army Reserve - a commission he resigned at the request of the military. Coleman moved to Chicago, Illinois, and interned at Provident Hospital. The next year, he became a resident in radiology and was certified in both diagnostic and therapeutic radiology and served as an attending physician part time at Provident while beginning a private practice. Then, in 1952, Coleman was called to take part in the Korean War. Reenlisting and serving as an Air Force captain, Coleman worked in an Air Force hospital in upstate New York for two years.

In 1955, Coleman moved back to Chicago and opened a practice on the city's South Side. In 1958, he began working part time at the West Side Veteran's Administration Hospital. Coleman was instrumental in a 1961 lawsuit resulting in integrated hospitals in Chicago. He continued to work with veterans until his 1988 retirement.

Coleman passed away on December 31, 2004 at age 84.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. John W. Coleman, Sr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 6, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Radiologist Dr. John W. Coleman, Sr. (1920 - 2004) was a certified radiology specialist and was instrumental in a 1961 lawsuit resulting in integrated hospitals in Chicago.

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:

Coleman, John, 1920-2004

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Bieschke, Paul (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Coleman, John, 1920-2004--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Radiologist

HistoryMakers® Category:

MedicalMakers

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 Dr. John W. Coleman, Sr., July 6, 2002. 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 Dr. John W. Coleman, Sr., Section A2002_099_001_001, TRT: 0:31:09 ?

Dr. John Coleman was born on December 18, 1920 in Glendale, a suburb of Spartanburg, South Carolina, to Birdie O'Neal Coleman, born in 1897 in South Carolina, and John Henry Coleman, born in 1899 in South Carolina. His paternal grandparents were also from South Carolina, and Coleman's great-grandfather

was a South Carolina State Senator. He grew up with an older sister and two younger brothers, in the mostly-black neighborhood in the South Side of Spartanburg. Coleman attended the “separate but unequal” segregated Dean Street Grammar School, where he enjoyed science and math. He then attended Cumming Street High School in Spartanburg from 1933 through 1937. Growing up in the South during the Depression, Coleman’s family struggled, but his father owned their farm and secured construction work through the Works Progress Administration. In his childhood, Coleman enjoyed the outdoors and playing sports, and he developed an early aspiration to become a doctor after seeing an influential film.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. John W. Coleman, Sr., Section A2002_099_001_002, TRT: 0:31:28 ?

Dr. John Coleman graduated from Cumming Street High School in Spartanburg, South Carolina in 1937, and then attended Johnson C. Smith University in Nashville, Tennessee. There, he studied anatomy and physiology and was a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. After graduating in June of 1941, Coleman returned home and worked in construction with his father until the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, when he then registered for the draft. Coleman was accepted to Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee, and the head of his draft board tore up Coleman’s draft notice and told him to attend medical school. While at Meharry Medical College, he was recruited into the U.S. Army Specialized Training Program to continue his medical studies. He graduated in 1945, after World War II ended. Coleman then became a radiology resident at Provident Hospital in Chicago, Illinois for three years, and then worked at Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago while preparing for his medical board exams.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. John W. Coleman, Sr., Section A2002_099_001_003, TRT: 0:30:40 ?

Dr. John Coleman worked at Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago, Illinois as a radiologist after his residency at Provident Hospital. Then, in 1950, he opened up his private practice on the South Side of Chicago while also serving as an attending physician at Provident Hospital. Coleman served in the U.S. Air Force as a radiologist from 1953 to 1955. He and other black officers who served in World War II had been asked to resign their commission because the U.S. Army did not want black officers, but Coleman was allowed to retain his commission and serve as a medical officer in New York during the Korean Conflict. Then, in 1958, after returning to Chicago from his commission, he worked at West Side Veteran’s Hospital. In 1961, Coleman was instrumental in filing a lawsuit on behalf of both black patients and black doctors to integrate Chicago hospitals. He described the poor healthcare black patients received compared to white patients as well as the limited opportunities of black doctors.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. John W. Coleman, Sr., Section A2002_099_001_004, TRT: 0:31:28 ?

Dr. John Coleman continued to run his private radiology practice on the South Side of Chicago, Illinois after the 1961 lawsuit to integrate Chicago hospitals until his retirement in 1988. He has been a part of numerous medical and community organizations, including the Cook County Physicians Association, Prairie State Medical Society, and the American Medical Association, which are the local, state and national branches of an organization of African American doctors. Coleman’s community involvement includes educating the black community, advocating for more black doctors, and working to change the way managed care treats patients. He retired a year after Provident Hospital in

Chicago, Illinois closed due to lack of funds. Coleman describes his legacy, reflects on his career, and describes as his hopes for the black community.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. John W. Coleman, Sr., Section A2002_099_001_005, TRT: 0:16:38 ?

Dr. John Coleman describes the changing nature of health care, including the managed care system through the Health and Maintenance Organization (HMO), that he has witnessed during his career. Then, he narrates his photographs.