

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with James H. Lowry

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Lowry, James , 1939-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with James H. Lowry,
Dates:	January 30, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:00:30).
Abstract:	Business consulting executive and management consulting chief executive James Lowry (1939 -) was president of the Chicago office of Boston Consulting and a leader in fostering and promoting diversity in the workplace. Lowry was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 30, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_026
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Management consultant and entrepreneur James H. Lowry was born in 1939 to Chicago postal workers Camille and William Lowry. Lowry graduated from the Francis W. Parker School in Chicago, and went on to earn his undergraduate degree from Grinnell College in Iowa. Lowry served in the Peace Corps in Tanzania and Puerto Rico before he returned to school to earn his master's degree in public international affairs from the University of Pittsburgh. In 1968, Lowry became McKinsey Consulting's first African American recruit.

At McKinsey, Lowry convinced corporate clients of the value of investing in minority communities and sought to increase the firm's number of African American consultants; he continued this work while attending Harvard Business School, where he served as class president in 1973. On assignment from former Commerce Secretary Juanita Morris Kreps, Lowry produced a report on the status of minorities in the twenty-first century that attracted the attention of numerous municipal and corporate clients, including PepsiCo and Ford. In 1975, Lowry used his knowledge and experience to found James H. Lowry & Associates. Lowry's strategic partnership with Ford led to the automotive giant sourcing more than \$3 billion dollars of goods and services to more than 300 minority suppliers. In 1981, Lowry approached his former employer, McKinsey, about its disappointing number of African American consultants, which he helped increase to nearly one hundred by 1999.

In 2000 Lowry was recruited to join the prominent Boston Consulting Group; as a president of the group's Chicago operations, he was credited for his productive involvement in the North American Black Diversity Initiative, a program that fosters the development of African American management consultant professionals on college campuses and within the company. An adjunct faculty member of Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management, Lowry developed a lauded education program for minority business professionals in 2002. Lowry and his wife, Doris, raised a daughter: Aisha.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with James H. Lowry was conducted by Larry Crowe on January 30, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Business consulting executive and management consulting chief executive James Lowry (1939 -) was president of the Chicago office of Boston Consulting and a leader in fostering and promoting diversity in the workplace.

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:

Lowry, James , 1939-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Lowry, James , 1939---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Boston Consulting Group

Occupations:

Business Consulting Executive

Management Consulting Chief Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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 James H. Lowry, January 30, 2003. 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 James H. Lowry, Section A2003_026_001_001, TRT: 0:29:20 ?
James Lowry describes his family background, telling stories about his ancestry in Mississippi and Tennessee, and then explains how his parents ended up in Chicago, where he was born. Lowry describes his parents' personalities and

describes their professional careers as postal workers. Lowry recalls his childhood Chicago neighborhood of Englewood, describing a close-knit community. He remembers attending A. O. Sexton Elementary school, and explains how the school prepared him to excel in both academics and athletics, which led to his enrollment at Francis W. Parker High School. Lowry discusses the adjustment he made while attending a previously all-white school. He explains how the Jewish students at the school helped him to adjust and considers the relationship between Jews and African Americans.

Video Oral History Interview with James H. Lowry, Section A2003_026_001_002, TRT: 0:30:05 ?

James Lowry considers the strength of the Jewish community internationally, and says he hopes the African American community will one day have the same strength. Lowry then provides a detailed description of his experience at Francis W. Parker High School in Chicago, discussing the athletics, academics, and social life, and explaining how the high school impacted his development. Lowry then explains his college admissions process, in which he considered many liberal arts colleges in the Midwest, and finally decided to attend Grinnell College. Lowry describes his experience at Grinnell, where he starred in athletics and made a good academic record. He discusses the racial environment at Grinnell, which was largely welcoming, but marred by an incident sparked by interracial dating. Lowry then talks about his study abroad scholarship to Tanzania, which opened his eyes to African culture.

Video Oral History Interview with James H. Lowry, Section A2003_026_001_003, TRT: 0:28:35 ?

James Lowry talks about how he made extra money while he was working in Tanzania. He then details some of his responsibilities with the Peace Corps. Then, Lowry explains how he left Tanzania after being recruited by Robert F. Kennedy. He discusses living and working abroad and talks about some life lessons he learned during that time. James Lowry recalls working in Bedford Stuyvesant and discusses its West Indian population. He then recalls being a television program host. Lowry remembers the forward-thinking spirit and political scene of the mid-1960s, mentioning political figures who worked with and influenced him. Next, James Lowry remembers Robert F. Kennedy and the Kennedy family. Lowry gives his beliefs on the importance of Americans being culturally exposed. He then describes the process in being hired by McKinsey & Company before talking specifically about some of his assignments. James Lowry explains the origin of his daughter's name.

Video Oral History Interview with James H. Lowry, Section A2003_026_001_004, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

James Lowry explains how he founded his own consulting firm, James H. Lowry and Associates, and describes the company's growth and its important role in empowering minority business owners. He explains how Chicago politicians aided him and his company in increasing the role of minority-owned businesses in government contracts. Lowry then discusses the television show he produces and hosts, 'Minority Business Report,' which provides news and analysis geared toward minority business owners. Lowry shares his hopes and concerns for the African American community, saying that blacks need to embrace the differences within their own culture. He then discusses the state of black-owned businesses, saying that blacks must become more prominent in big business and create jobs for the community. Lowry then considers his legacy and reiterates his desire for increased tolerance in the black community.

Video Oral History Interview with James H. Lowry, Section A2003_026_001_005, TRT: 0:03:20 ?

James Lowry hopes he will be remembered as a mentor who wanted all of his employees and associates to better themselves and succeed. Lowry then speaks briefly about his ambition to continue his success, and how he hopes his family

will share in that success.