

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Kenneth Walker

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Walker, Kenneth, 1930-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Kenneth Walker,
Dates:	August 13, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:29:29).
Abstract:	Education professor and basketball referee Kenneth Walker (1930 - 2019) is a collegiate basketball referee and educator who has worked to improve urban education in Rhode Island. Walker was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 13, 2003, in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_186
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Educator and basketball referee Kenneth R. Walker, Sr. has devoted his career to serving his home state of Rhode Island. Born in East Providence on December 19, 1930, to Lillian and Frank Walker, Walker has dedicated his professional life to improving urban education.

Walker attended Providence College, where he received a B.A. in 1957. Upon graduating, he began teaching English and social studies for the East Providence School District while also serving as a guidance counselor. He earned an M.Ed. from Rhode Island College in 1962, where he worked part time from 1967 to 1969 as the assistant director of Project Upward Bound, a federally supported program for economically and educationally disadvantaged youth. Walker was promoted to assistant principal at Central Jr. High School before accepting a position as assistant professor of education at Rhode Island College in 1970. He remained on the education faculty at Rhode Island College until 1993, rising to the rank of full professor in 1989. Walker also earned a Ph.D. in education from Boston University.

During his tenure at Rhode Island College, Walker directed the Teacher Corps, a project of the college and the Pawtucket School Department aimed at raising the quality of education for low-income students. Walker also served as director of urban education at the university. In 1963, Walker became a basketball referee and officiated Division I games in the East Coast, Big East and Atlantic 10 athletic conferences. He traveled with a team of Big East all-stars to Angola in 1982. Walker also served on the Rhode Island Board of Parole.

In 1998, Walker joined Johnson & Wales University as an associate professor. He was a member of several educators and basketball referee organizations and served as president of the Big Brothers of Rhode Island. Walker was honored several times for his service to youth and education, and was the 1980 recipient of the NAACP Freedom Fund Award in Education. He married Gail B. Smith in 1955, and had three children.

Walker passed away on January 30, 2019.

Kenneth Walker was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 13, 2003.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Kenneth Walker was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on August 13, 2003, in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Education professor and basketball referee Kenneth Walker (1930 - 2019) is a collegiate basketball referee and educator who has worked to improve urban education in Rhode Island.

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:

Walker, Kenneth, 1930-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Walker, Kenneth, 1930- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Basketball Referee

HistoryMakers® Category:

SportsMakers

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 Kenneth Walker, August 13, 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 Kenneth Walker, Section A2003_186_001_001, TRT: 0:31:14 ?

Kenneth Walker was born on December 19, 1930. His mother, Lillian Frye Walker, was born in Virginia. She passed away when he was six years old. His father, Frank Walker, was born in Providence, Rhode Island and worked as a porter for the Providence Journal before buying a rubbish removal business. As

a youth, Walker and two of his brothers worked seven days a week on his father's rubbish removal truck. He also remembers that his father was active in the Freemasons. Walker was raised in East Providence, Rhode Island in a majority white, Portuguese neighborhood. He recalls the trolley cars going up and down the cobblestone streets of his neighborhood and describes Rhode Island's colonial history and the Portuguese and Cape Verdean communities in the region. Walker was a talkative child; he enjoyed playing sports and was a Boy Scout. In East Providence, he attended Bliss Elementary School, Central Junior High School, and East Providence High School. He would later return to Central Junior High School to teach.

Video Oral History Interview with Kenneth Walker, Section A2003_186_001_002, TRT: 0:30:47 ?

Kenneth Walker attended East Providence High School in East Providence, Rhode Island, there he played sports, enjoyed history, and aspired to be a teacher. He can recall only one incident in high school where he felt he was unfairly disciplined because of his race. Walker was mentored by Reverend Dr. Samuel D. Proctor, the minister at Pond Street Baptist Church in Providence, Rhode Island, which served the region's African American community. In 1951, Proctor left Providence to serve on the faculty at Virginia Union University in Richmond and encouraged Walker to apply to the university. Walker attended Virginia Union for two and a half years before leaving to serve in the Korean War. After being discharged, he completed his undergraduate degree at Providence College in 1957. He then returned to his former junior high school, Central Junior High School in East Providence, to teach. When his former junior high basketball coach became principal of the school, Walker became the assistant principal.

Video Oral History Interview with Kenneth Walker, Section A2003_186_001_003, TRT: 0:30:41 ?

Kenneth Walker worked at a settlement house in Providence, Rhode Island while completing his undergraduate degree at Providence College. From 1957 through 1970, he served on the faculty of Central Junior High School in East Providence, Rhode Island, as a teacher, in the guidance department, and as assistant principal. Walker believes that every child can learn. He earned his M.A. degree from Rhode Island College in Providence in 1962. In 1963, he began to officiate high school and college basketball games on the East Coast, from Maine to South Carolina and as far west as Indiana. He lists his favorite coaches, including Chuck Daly and Jim Calhoun and recalls times he has confronted disrespectful players and coaches. In 1970, he joined the faculty of Rhode Island College, there he oversaw its Upward Bound program, a federally supported program for economically and educationally disadvantaged youth, established in 1966. Walker's flexible schedule as a professor, allowed him to officiate games during the week.

Video Oral History Interview with Kenneth Walker, Section A2003_186_001_004, TRT: 0:31:13 ?

Kenneth Walker had a demanding schedule as a basketball official, sometimes he worked seven nights a week and missed many holidays with his family. He enjoyed the excitement of traveling as a basketball official. Walker lists some of his favorite players including, Eddie Jordan, Marvin Barnes, and Ron Perry. Walker remembers a time when referees were paid in cash. Walker began teaching classes in Rhode Island prisons during the late 1970s. In 1980, Walker was appointed to the Rhode Island State Parole Board; he served on the board for twenty-three years. He talks about the professional background of the members of Parole Board. He estimates that the Rhode Island penal system is about 20 percent people of color and the average cost of incarceration is \$42,000 per year per person. He believes that U.S. drug laws and the high cost of legal

representation have had a disproportionately negative effect on people of color and that it is important that there are programs to help inmates transition back into society.

Video Oral History Interview with Kenneth Walker, Section A2003_186_001_005, TRT: 0:25:34 ?

Kenneth Walker served on the Rhode Island State Parole Board for twenty-three years. During that time he observed that drug and alcohol addiction were major factors leading to incarceration. He talks about the number of Federal Correctional Institutions in New England, contractors who profit from the U.S. prison system, and the Attica, New York Prison Riot of 1971. Walker believes the prison system should be tailored to better fit the needs of inmates, there should be a better pre-release support system, and there should be a system of halfway back facilities, which would provide support for former inmates without reincarcerating them. He recalls that his daughter was afraid to be home alone because he served on the Rhode Island State Parole Board. Walker describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community and reflects upon his legacy.