

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Warren Marr, II

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Marr, Warren, II, 1916-2010
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Warren Marr, II,
Dates:	September 18, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:04:56).
Abstract:	Civic leader Warren Marr, II (1916 - 2010) is the former editor of The Crisis Magazine and co-founder of Amistad Affiliates. Marr was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 18, 2003, in Valley Cottage, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_217
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Founder of the Amistad Research Center, Warren Q. Marr II has been a leading advocate for active preservation of African American history and culture for more than fifty years. Born on July 31, 1916, in Pittsburgh, Marr studied journalism and printing at Wilberforce University.

Following graduation, Marr was hired in 1938 as a linotype operator at *The St. Louis Argus*. From 1939 to 1942, he worked in that capacity for *The Plaindealer* in Kansas City, Kansas, rising to the post of assistant editor. Marr then joined the business world as a concert promoter with a host of clients, including the well-known singer, William Vesey. From 1968 to 1974, Marr was hired to reenergize the NAACP's hallmark publication as editor of *The Crisis*.

However, it was in the early 1960s that Marr first learned of the now-famous Amistad trial while working at the American Missionary Association. Here, Marr's interest in preservation was formed. He joined forces with Clifton Johnson and created the Amistad Research Center. Marr would spend the next few decades crisscrossing the United States, speaking to African American individuals and groups, encouraging them to preserve their records. In 1966, he co-founded the Amistad Research Center as a unique repository for African American paper papers and other artifacts. This center was housed at Dillard University before moving to its current home at Tulane University. Currently, the Center serves as a research repository and library housing more than 10 million items.

Upon retirement, Marr decided to pursue another method for preserving the Amistad legacy. Marr aimed to educate the public about this important chapter in American history when a slave ship was commandeered by a group of slaves off the coast of the United States, resulting in an internationally significant case that employed the talents of John Quincy Adams. In 1991, Marr helped found Amistad Affiliates, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the creation of a replica of the historic schooner *Amistad* for purposes of keeping the Amistad legacy alive. After years of construction, the ship has sailed to ports around the world promoting peace and goodwill and offering educational curriculum.

Marr and his wife, attorney Carmel Carrington, have been married since 1948 and have two adult children, Warren Quincy III and Charles Carrington. Warren Marr II and his wife live in Valley Cottage, New York.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Warren Marr, II was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on September 18, 2003, in Valley Cottage, New York, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civic leader Warren Marr, II (1916 - 2010) is the former editor of The Crisis Magazine and co-founder of Amistad Affiliates.

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:

Marr, Warren, II, 1916-2010

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Marr, Warren, II, 1916-2010--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Civic Leader

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Warren Marr, II, September 18, 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 Warren Marr, II, Section A2003_217_001_001, TRT: 0:30:39 ?

Warren Marr, II was born on July 31, 1916. His mother, Cindy Antoinette McGee Marr, grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where her father was a minister at St. James A.M.E. Church. His father, Warren Quincy Marr, studied plumbing at Carnegie Tech in Pittsburgh; following his graduation, he was unable to find work as a plumber so, he worked for Ford Motor Company as an

elevator motorman. Marr's paternal grandfather was originally from Warrenton, Virginia. Marr's earliest memories are of gatherings at his grandparents' house on Winslow Street in Pittsburgh. When he was seven years old, Marr cut his hand dropping a milk bottle. He remembers taking his younger siblings to Western Pennsylvania Hospital whenever one got hurt and his mother baking pies for the neighborhood children. His sister Grace Marr introduced him to his wife HistoryMaker Carmel Carrington Marr, who Grace had befriended at Columbia University in New York, New York.

Video Oral History Interview with Warren Marr, II, Section A2003_217_001_002, TRT: 0:30:33 ?

Warren Marr, II attended Peabody High School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania during the 1920s where he was the only African American student. Though Pittsburgh was segregated, his father always rented homes in the white section of town. Marr's maternal family was fair-skinned; and Marr and his mother occasionally passed as white. He had a tenuous relationship with his father throughout high school. During the Great Depression, Marr's mother used welfare checks to pay for groceries, but kept the family neat and clean, so many community members did not realize how poor they were. Marr attended Wilberforce University in Ohio where he majored in journalism, and was able to pay in-state tuition because his aunt lived in Xenia, Ohio. Marr remembers the college being divided into a state-financed side and church-financed side, but he took classes on both sides. Marr worked for the Pittsburgh Courier and the Plain Dealer as a linotypist after college and later, managed a concert for one of his Wilberforce classmates.

Video Oral History Interview with Warren Marr, II, Section A2003_217_001_003, TRT: 0:30:55 ?

Warren Marr, II describes an instance of racial discrimination at a movie theater in southern Illinois, near Cairo and Mound City. Marr relocated to St. Louis, Missouri where he worked as a linotypist for the St. Louis Argus. He then moved to Ohio to work in a similar capacity for the Plain Dealer. Marr eventually moved to New York, New York where he became involved in concert management. He managed a number of both African American and white performers at the Times Hall and Town Hall in New York before his wife, HistoryMaker Carmel Marr, convinced him to leave the business. Finally, Marr began a greeting cards business named the house of Marr with his siblings and Bruce Nugent. Though it gained notable clients such as Carson Pirie Scott, the business was short-lived.

Video Oral History Interview with Warren Marr, II, Section A2003_217_001_004, TRT: 0:30:44 ?

Warren Marr, II worked in concert management in New York, New York during the 1930s Harlem Renaissance. He met Caterina Jarboro while attending a function at St. Philip's Church, and Eubie Blake and Noble Lee Sissle would played piano at his apartment in the 409 Edgecombe Avenue building on Sugar Hill in Harlem, New York. Marr began working for Homeland Ministries and the American Missionary Association (AMA) with Anna Arnold Hedgeman at the United Church of Christ. The AMA was an abolitionist organization formed in 1846; prior to its founding, some of its organizers were involved in the legal defense of the Amistad captives in 1839. Marr learned of the history of the Amistad through his AMA work, and formed Friends of Amistad, which later became Amistad Affiliates. He met Clifton Johnson who made him aware of the availability of over 300,000 AMA documents to study, and the two formed the Amistad Research Center. Marr is married to HistoryMaker Carmel Marr.

Video Oral History Interview with Warren Marr, II, Section A2003_217_001_005, TRT: 0:31:09 ?

Warren Marr, II, visited six American Missionary Association (AMA) colleges as secretary of AMA's college centennials. His AMA colleague Clifton Johnson

catalogued over 300,000 documents, including histories of AMA schools and churches, which were eventually stored at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. Some documents experienced water damage, but the majority were maintained and ultimately relocated to their permanent repository at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana. By the 1990s, the Amistad Research Center's collection included ten million documents of AMA institutions as well as papers of non-AMA individuals and organizations, such as Bishop Stephen Gill Spotswood of CME Church in New York. Additionally, the 1997 film 'Amistad,' produced by Debbie Allen and directed by Steven Spielberg, was influential in sharing knowledge about the Amistad's 19th century history, such as the fact that President John Quincy Adams defended the Amistad captives in the 1839 trial before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Video Oral History Interview with Warren Marr, II, Section A2003_217_001_006, TRT: 0:30:56 ?

Warren Marr, II along with Bill Pinkney had a ship built by a California firm, a process which took two years to complete. He describes his plans to sail to: New Orleans, Louisiana; Houston, Texas; Panama City; Puerto Rico where he owns a timeshare; and Sierra Leone for lumber. Marr reflects upon his legacy and narrates his photographs. He concludes by describing his role in augmenting a NAACP magazine, The Crisis, at the national level.