

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with William Raspberry

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Raspberry, William
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with William Raspberry,
Dates:	September 27, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:57:14).
Abstract:	Newspaper columnist William Raspberry (1935 - 2012) writes twice-weekly columns for 'The Washington Post,' which are syndicated around the country. In 1991, Raspberry published 'Looking Backward at Us', a book of columns that touch on the themes of education, poverty, drugs, racism and parenting. Raspberry was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 27, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_224
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Newspaper columnist William Raspberry is a highly regarded journalist whose twice-weekly columns for *The Washington Post* are syndicated around the country. Born on October 12, 1935, in Okolona, Mississippi, Raspberry has won the respect and admiration of his media peers for his opinions and reporting.

Raspberry earned a B.S. degree from Indiana Central College in 1958, and from 1960 to 1962 worked in Washington, D.C., as a public information officer with the U.S. Army. After finishing his military service, Raspberry took a job with *The Washington Post* as a teletypist. Within a few months, he had moved up to writing obituary notices. Raspberry later joined the paper's city desk, first as a reporter and later as an assistant editor.

In 1966, Raspberry took over *The Washington Post's* "Potomac Watch" column, which concerned local issues. During his tenure, Raspberry molded the column to fit his own interests, which included such topics as drug abuse, criminal justice and minority issues. Independent in tone, neither liberal nor conservative in philosophy, Raspberry consistently wrote on the importance of human responsibility and self-esteem.

Raspberry's columns have earned him numerous awards and much praise, particularly from his colleagues and peers. The Capitol Press Club named him Journalist of the Year for 1965 for his reporting on the Watts Riot in Los Angeles. A longtime member of the Pulitzer Prize Board, Raspberry was nominated for journalism's highest honor in 1982. He finally won the award in 1994 for Distinguished Commentary.

In 1991, Raspberry published *Looking Backward at Us*, a book of columns that touch on the themes of education, poverty, drugs, racism and parenting. Raspberry has also taught journalism at Howard University, and is a frequent panelist on television talk shows. He resides in Washington, D.C.

William Raspberry passed away on July 17, 2012.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with William Raspberry was conducted by Lisa Bass on September 27, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Newspaper columnist William Raspberry (1935 - 2012) writes twice-weekly columns for 'The Washington Post,' which are syndicated around the country. In 1991, Raspberry published 'Looking Backward at Us', a book of columns that touch on the themes of education, poverty, drugs, racism and parenting.

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:

Raspberry, William

Bass, Lisa (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Raspberry, William--Interviews

Newspaper employees--Washington (D.C.)--Interviews

African American journalists--Washington (D.C.)--Interviews

Segregation in education--Mississippi--Okolona

Okolona (Miss.)--Social life and customs

Riots--California--Los Angeles--History--20th century

Mass media and minorities--United States

Pulitzer Prizes

Blair, Jayson

Cooke, Janet

Journalistic ethics

African American journalists--History

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Washington Post Company

Occupations:

Newspaper Columnist

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 William Raspberry, September 27, 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 William Raspberry, Section A2003_224_001_001, TRT: 0:29:05
?

William Raspberry talks about his parents' family origins, and their commitment to education despite living in segregated Okolona, Mississippi. He then talks about his childhood growing up in Okolona and shares a story reflecting his mischievous personality. Lastly, Raspberry talks the schools he attended.

Newspaper employees--Washington (D.C.)--Interviews.

African American journalists--Washington (D.C.)--Interviews.

Segregation in education--Mississippi--Okolona.

Okolona (Miss.)--Social life and customs.

Riots--California--Los Angeles--History--20th century.

Mass media and minorities--United States.

Pulitzer Prizes.

Blair, Jayson.

Cooke, Janet.

Journalistic ethics.

African American journalists--History.

Video Oral History Interview with William Raspberry, Section A2003_224_001_002, TRT: 0:29:12
?

William Raspberry recalls the school system designed for African Americans in segregated Okolona, Mississippi in the 1940s. He then talks about the influential teachers he had throughout his formal education, including his parents, who were educators. Raspberry then describes his first foray into journalism and the mentors who helped him along the way. Lastly, Raspberry talks about the Washington Post's handling of the Watts Riots in 1965 and the subsequent integration of the newsroom.

Video Oral History Interview with William Raspberry, Section A2003_224_001_003, TRT: 0:28:54
?

William Raspberry talks about the early African American journalists that worked for major, white newspapers and the professional networks that developed. He then discusses his wife, their courtship and their family. Raspberry then comments on the highlights of his career, including the Pulitzer Prize he received in 1994. Lastly, he talks about his interests in the field of education, namely his "giving back" to the children from his hometown of Okolona, Mississippi.

Video Oral History Interview with William Raspberry, Section A2003_224_001_004, TRT: 0:30:03
?

William Raspberry comments on the recent scandals caused by fabricated stories by black journalists Janet Cooke and Jayson Blair. He then talks about the issues of journalistic ethics and details Jesse Jackson's racial remarks that contributed to his failed presidential bid in 1984. Raspberry talks about his legacy and remembrance, and lastly, comments on the state of the African American community.