

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with John Britton

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Britton, John H.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with John Britton,
Dates:	August 5, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:42:17).
Abstract:	Academic administrator and newspaper editor John Britton (1937 -) worked for Jet magazine covering the Civil Rights Movement. Britton later was the publicity manager at Motown Records and the Washington Post, and serves as the assistant to the president of Meharry Medical College. Britton was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 5, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_188
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Distinguished African American journalist and college administrator, John H. Britton, Jr., was born July 21, 1937, in Nashville, Tennessee, to Martha Parrish Britton, a school teacher, and John Henry Britton, Sr., a minister. He credits them with instilling in him lifelong strong values and religious principles. He graduated from Pearl High School in 1954, a few days after the U. S. Supreme Court's decision on Brown v. Board of Education. He enrolled in Lincoln University in Missouri, transferred after two years to the University of Michigan, and in 1958, he graduated from Drake University with a B.S. degree in journalism. In 1962, he earned an M.S. degree in journalism from Syracuse University in New York.

Britton moved to Atlanta, where he served as a reporter for the *Atlanta Daily World*. In 1962, he was hired by *Jet* magazine and worked there as an associate editor until 1966 when he went to work for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and later on the Ralph Bunche Civil Rights Documentation Project in Washington, D.C. In 1968, he returned to *Jet* magazine as managing editor. In 1971, Britton worked as a publicity manager with Motown Records, and then, in 1973, he was hired as director of public affairs with the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies in Washington. He then moved to *The Washington Post* in 1976 to serve as public relations manager. In March 1978, Britton was hired as the director and then associate vice president for public affairs at the University of the District of Columbia, where he served for nineteen years.

In 1998, Britton returned to Nashville, Tennessee, as associate vice president for marketing and assistant to the president of Meharry Medical College. He continues to serve in the latter position. Throughout his career, he has served as a speechwriter and editorial consultant. Britton is married to Mrs. Cherrie Alvilda Dean Britton and is the stepfather of two adult sons. He and his first wife are the parents of one son, John H. Britton III of Potomac, Maryland. A member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity since his undergraduate days at Lincoln University, Britton is also a member of the NAACP, and an associate member of the National Association of Black Journalists.

Britton was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 5, 2005.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with John Britton was conducted by Ed Anderson on August 5, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Academic administrator and newspaper editor John Britton (1937 -) worked for Jet magazine covering the Civil Rights Movement. Britton later was the publicity manager at Motown Records and the Washington Post, and serves as the assistant to the president of Meharry Medical College.

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:

Britton, John H.

Anderson, Ed (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Britton, John H.--Interviews

African American journalists--United States--Interviews.

African American college administrators--United States--Interviews.

Newspaper editors--United States--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Newspaper Editor

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 John Britton, August 5, 2005. 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 John Britton, Section A2005_188_001_001, TRT: 0:28:20 ?

John Britton describes his family background, detailing his mother's and father's personalities and occupations. He explains that his father, a preacher, and his mother, a teacher, were well known in Nashville's black community. Britton also shares what he knows about his ancestors on both sides of his family.

African American fathers--Tennessee--Nashville.

African American mothers--Tennessee--Nashville.

African American ministers--Tennessee--Nashville.

Genealogy.

Video Oral History Interview with John Britton, Section A2005_188_001_002, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

John Britton describes his childhood and youth growing up in Nashville, Tennessee. Britton shares stories about relatives who lived nearby and recounts his family's various moves to different black neighborhoods in Nashville. Britton then describes his favorite hobbies and shares his early aspirations of becoming a musician or journalist. Britton also describes his elementary school and his high school.

Childhood and youth--Tennessee--Nashville.

African American families--Tennessee--Nashville.

African American neighborhoods--Tennessee--Nashville.

Education--Tennessee--Nashville.

Video Oral History Interview with John Britton, Section A2005_188_001_003, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

John Britton describes his time in high school, talking about his favorite subjects and activities and describing influential teachers. Britton then recounts his college experiences, which saw him transfer twice, eventually graduating from Drake University. Britton then talks about graduate school at Syracuse University, which helped him to further his burgeoning career in journalism. From 1958 to 1966, Britton worked for the 'Atlanta Daily World' and 'Jet' magazine, and then in 1966, he left 'Jet' to work for the U.S. Civil Rights Commission.

Education, Secondary--Tennessee--Nashville.

African American college students.

Drake University.

Syracuse University.

United States Commission on Civil Rights.

Video Oral History Interview with John Britton, Section A2005_188_001_004, TRT: 0:31:00 ?

John Britton details his career as a reporter for the 'Atlanta Daily World' and 'Jet' magazine during the Civil Rights Movement. Britton recalls important black journalists and photographers that helped to shape coverage of the Civil Rights Movement. Britton then describes the impact of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and John F. Kennedy assassinations, and recalls his time spent with Dr. King, Bayard Rustin, and other civil rights leaders. Britton then explains why he left journalism to become a publicist at Motown Records.

Reporters and reporting.

King, Martin Luther Jr., 1929-1968--Assassination.

Kennedy, John F. (John Fitzgerald), 1917-1963--Assassination.

Rustin, Bayard, 1912-1987.

Civil rights movement--United States.

Motown Record Corporation.

Video Oral History Interview with John Britton, Section A2005_188_001_005, TRT: 0:31:15 ?

John Britton describes his transition from public relations at Motown Records to policy work at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. Britton then explains his series of job changes in the public relations field, eventually settling at the University of the District of Columbia for seventeen years, before relocating to his current position at Meharry Medical College. Britton looks back on his life and career, shares his thoughts about the future of the black community and discusses his son and granddaughters.

Motown Record Corporation.

Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies (U.S.).

University of the District of Columbia.

Meharry Medical College.

African American children.

Video Oral History Interview with John Britton, Section A2005_188_001_006, TRT: 0:12:42 ?

John Britton reflects on his legacy, recommends reading material to aspiring journalists, and describes the significance of history.

Journalism--Study and teaching.

History.