

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lee H. Walker

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Walker, Lee H., 1938-2018
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Lee H. Walker,
Dates:	August 12, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	10 Betacame SP videocassettes (4:35:21).
Abstract:	Corporate executive and nonprofit chief executive Lee H. Walker (1938 - 2018) was the founder, director, and president of the New Coalition for Economic and Social Change, and a senior fellow with the Heartland Institute. Walker was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 12, 2005, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_197
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Lee Henderson Walker, business executive, vice president, and senior fellow with the Heartland Institute, and founder, director, and president of the New Coalition for Economic and Social Change, was born on October 6, 1938, in Troy, Alabama, where he graduated from Academy High School in 1957. In 1960, after briefly attending Alabama State University, Walker moved to New York City to attend Brooklyn College while working as an insurance salesman for American Progressive Insurance. Walker was then hired at Winston-Muss Corporation in New York as director of employee relations, where he remained from 1961 to 1970. In 1970, Walker became national distribution manager for Sears Roebuck & Company.

While at Sears, Walker completed his B.S. degree in economics and business management, and was awarded a degree from Fordham University in 1975, the same year he served as vice president of the Brooklyn, New York chapter of the NAACP.

After retiring from Sears in 1993, Walker went on to found the New Coalition for Economic and Social Change in Chicago, Illinois, and to serve as chairman of the American Fund of the University of the Orange Free State (South Africa). A former columnist for *Crain's Chicago Business* and editorial writer for the *Chicago Defender*, Walker was also a member of the American Management Association; the board of the Association for the Integration of Management (AIM); the National Urban League Guild of New York City and the Community Development Board of the University of Chicago's Office of Special Programs. Walker was also director of the Chicago State University Foundation, and a trustee of Illinois Community Colleges. Between 1990 and 1992, Walker served as chairman of the Merit Advisory Board of the Department of Personnel of the Office of the Secretary of State of Illinois. A past president of the Republican Political Club, Walker also served as a member of the New York City Local Draft Board.

In 1967, the New Rochelle Branch of the NAACP gave Walker its distinguished service award, and in 1972, the

Harlem Branch of the YMCA gave him the Black Achievers in Industry Award. In 1996, Walker was awarded the Heartland Liberty Prize.

Walker is married to Audrey Davis Walker, with whom he resides in Burr Ridge, Illinois. They have had four children.

Walker passed away on November 8, 2018.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Lee H. Walker was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 12, 2005, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 10 Betacame SP videocassettes. Corporate executive and nonprofit chief executive Lee H. Walker (1938 - 2018) was the founder, director, and president of the New Coalition for Economic and Social Change, and a senior fellow with the Heartland Institute.

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, Lee H., 1938-2018

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Walker, Lee H., 1938-2018 --Interviews

African American businesspeople--Interviews

African American executives--Interviews

Conservatives--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

New Coalition for Economic and Social Change (U.S.)

Occupations:

Nonprofit Chief Executive

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 Lee H. Walker, August 12, 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 Lee H. Walker, Section A2005_197_001_001, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

Lee H. Walker was born on October 6, 1938 in Troy, Alabama. His mother, Lois Lumpkin, was born in the 1920s and raised in Troy. She gave birth to ten children. Walker, however, was raised by his maternal grandmother, Dora Lumpkin. His maternal great-great-grandfather, George Lee Lumpkin, was taken from the West Coast of Africa to the United States in the transatlantic slave trade. He was then taken to a plantation in Georgia and fled to Alabama where he started a small school in a church. Walker also talks about his great-great grandfather's land ownership and voting in mid-twentieth century Alabama.

African American businesspeople--Interviews.

African American executives--Interviews.

Conservatives--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Lee H. Walker, Section A2005_197_001_002, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Lee H. Walker was raised by his grandmother, Dora Lumpkin, in Troy, Alabama. Lumpkin worked as a domestic for a local white family, but she also a property-owner; owning her own home as well as a second one that she rented out. Walker's parents, Lois Lumpkin and Amos Walker, met as children but never married. Walker's father was born near Troy, Alabama. His paternal grandfather, Demp Walker, was a landowner and storeowner in Troy. He sold candy, pecans, timber and other miscellaneous items. Walker talks about race and class relations in Troy. Schoolteachers were the most respected individuals; and although Troy was segregated, Walker interacted with white children. The African American neighborhood in Troy was in shouting distance of its white neighborhood. Walker learned to shout over when he was being disciplined and a white voice would shout back, scolding the disciplinarian. Walker remembers stories of relatives that had their property stolen by whites as well as folktales about "John and Old Master."

Video Oral History Interview with Lee H. Walker, Section A2005_197_001_003, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Lee H. Walker graduated from Academy High School in Troy, Alabama in 1957 and earned an academic scholarship to Alabama Agriculture and Mechanical University (Alabama A&M) in Huntsville, Alabama. Walker established a close relationship with his high school principal, Cecil Griffin, and visited Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, Alabama in the ninth grade. At Tuskegee, Walker was introduced to Booker T. Washington and read Washington's autobiography, 'Up From Slavery,' following his visit. Walker was inspired by Washington to be adventurous and he traveled to Plant City, Florida at sixteen years old to pick oranges. He left Florida for Dover, Delaware to pick potatoes and left shortly afterward for Long Island, New York. Walker's father, Amos Walker, worked as a laborer in various locations, including at a saw mill. Walker describes his earliest childhood memories including almost being hit by a train, seeing Sam Cooke and Marvin Gaye, and traveling with his mother whenever she married.

Video Oral History Interview with Lee H. Walker, Section A2005_197_001_004, TRT: 0:27:00 ?

Lee H. Walker migrated to New York, New York in 1955. He had been employed as a migrant worker in Delaware and fled to New York City. Walker describes experiencing culture shock and meeting a family that allowed him to stay. He worked in a rag factory and returned to Alabama after one month, where he completed high school at Academy High School in Troy, Alabama in 1957. Walker earned an academic scholarship to Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University (Alabama A&M). He stayed for one quarter and transferred to Alabama State University in Montgomery, Alabama to be closer to his girlfriend. He studied at Alabama State for two years, but dreamed, however, of working on Wall Street and left Alabama a second time for New York City. Walker Enrolled in Brooklyn College, but was kicked out because he could not afford the tuition. He got a job washing dishes at a hospital in Queens, New York earning \$50 a week. Walker describes having to make ends meet before eventually being hired as an insurance salesman.

Video Oral History Interview with Lee H. Walker, Section A2005_197_001_005, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

Lee H. Walker started his career in 1961 as an office boy at the Winston Muss Corporation located in the Rockefeller Center. He saw an advertisement in the New York Times paying \$55 dollars a week. In the interview, Walker was asked if he knew how to file and answered that, “he had the capacity to learn”—a line he had read in ‘The Agony and the Ecstasy,’ a biographical novel of Michelangelo by Irving Stone. Walker was hired at \$50 a week and mentored by Winston Muss founder David Muss. Walker continued working toward his bachelor’s degree at New York University, and contributed to the founding of the Council of Concerned Black Executives (C.C.B.E.), with the help of Whitney Young. The group later split and Walker was a part of the faction that started the Association for the Integration of Management (A.I.M.). Walker left the Winston Muss Corporation ten years later as director of employee relations.

Video Oral History Interview with Lee H. Walker, Section A2005_197_001_006, TRT: 0:28:50 ?

Lee H. Walker worked at the Winston Muss Corporation from 1961 to 1970. He wanted to work at a larger corporation and took a job at Sears & Company in 1970. Walker worked with Sears until May 1, 1993, first in New York City and then in Chicago, Illinois. While in New York, Walker became involved in the Brooklyn chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and was eventually named vice president of the chapter. As part of his work with the NAACP, Walker helped organize a program to integrate the night shift at Wall Street banks. Working at the NAACP, Walker met Roy Wilkins, HistoryMaker Earl G. Graves, Sr., Shirley Chisholm and others. He also remained active with the Association for the Integration of Management. Walker critiqued affirmative action, and reflects on the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the role of women, like Jo Ann Robinson, in its organization.

Video Oral History Interview with Lee H. Walker, Section A2005_197_001_007, TRT: 0:29:21 ?

Lee H. Walker had the opportunity to get involved in public policy and governmental affairs on the Sears Governmental Affairs Committee. He visited the White House numerous times during Ronald Reagan’s administration as a member of the committee. He also worked as a corporate advisor for Harold Washington’s administration in Chicago, Illinois. Walker talks about being in favor of privatization and enterprise zones. Walker is the founder and president of the New Coalition for Economic and Social Change which was founded following the Alternatives Conference in 1980. The organization advocates for African American economic self-sufficiency. Walker shares his views on the economic effects of globalization, Latino immigration to Chicago, Illinois, as

well as education and poverty in the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Lee H. Walker, Section A2005_197_001_008, TRT: 0:27:50 ?

Lee H. Walker describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community and critiques the condition of American public schools and the public school systems within African American communities. He talks about having had the opportunity to debate with leaders in the African American community, specifically those that do not agree with him, including HistoryMaker Reverend Jesse L. Jackson. Walker appeared on Reverend Jesse L. Jackson's show a number of times and spoke at a conference sponsored by the Mercatus Center for the staff of the Congressional Black Caucus, the Urban League, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Walker talks about job discrimination and advocates for politically diverse views from within the African American community. Walker also talks about James T. Meeks, former member of the Illinois Senate and founder of the Salem Baptist Church of Chicago, Illinois.

Video Oral History Interview with Lee H. Walker, Section A2005_197_001_009, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Lee H. Walker considers his legacy and what he might have done differently. He talks about the black conservative tradition and shares his thoughts on Alexander Hamilton and U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. Walker talks about speaking as a black republican at the Democratic National Convention, and talks about his family also.

Video Oral History Interview with Lee H. Walker, Section A2005_197_001_010, TRT: 0:15:00 ?

Lee H. Walker describes how he would like to be remembered and narrates his photographs.