

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

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Carlos, John, 1945-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with John Carlos,
Dates:	March 29, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	3 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:13:00).
Abstract:	Track and field athlete John Carlos (1945 -) is most well known for being the bronze medalist for the 200-meter race during the 1968 Olympic games and raising a black power salute on the podium with Tommie Smith. Carlos was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 29, 2006, in Palm Springs, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_055
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

John Carlos was born in 1945 in Harlem, New York. Carlos attended Machine Trade and Medical High School, where he was a talented track star. He received a full scholarship to East Texas State University (ETSU), and became that school's first track and field Lone Star Conference Champion. After only one year at ETSU, Carlos was accepted at San Jose State University. Under the tutelage of Lloyd "Bud" Winter, a notable coach who would eventually be inducted into the National Track & Field Hall of Fame, Carlos began to thrive as an athlete.

While attending San Jose State University, Carlos met sociologist Harry Edwards, and under Edward's influence helped to co-found the Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR). Edwards wanted to boycott the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City as a protest of the United States' inability to deal with its human rights injustices. Despite the support of Carlos, Carlos' newfound friend and fellow athlete Tommie Smith and a variety of civil rights leaders, the boycott never occurred. However, Carlos remained impressed by Edward's ideas. His athletic career, meanwhile, had taken off – in the 1967 Pan-American games, Carlos was a bronze medalist for the 200 meter event.

At the time of the trials for the 1968 Olympic Games, Carlos beat Smith's world record time for the 200 meter dash by 0.3 seconds, although a technicality kept the score from being officially recorded. During the actual 200 meter event, Carlos finished third, behind Smith and Australian Peter Norman. While receiving their medals, Smith and Carlos raised their gloved fists as a silent protest of racism and economic depression among oppressed people in America. In response, International Olympic Committee president Avery Brundage banned the two men from the Olympic Village and forced them from the United States Olympic team. After their return to the United States, both men received death threats. However, they had become a significant symbol of the Civil Rights struggle. Carlos also saw Martin Luther King, Jr. just ten days before King's assassination.

Carlos continued to compete and excel in the field of track, and 1969 proved to be a year of great accomplishment.

He tied the 100-yard dash record that year with a time of 9.1 seconds and led San Jose State to the NCAA championship for the first time, thanks to his winnings in the 100, 220 and 4x100-yard relay events. After his track career ended, Carlos joined the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles, where an unfortunate knee injury cut his professional football career short after only one year. He continued to play football in Canada for the CFL, with one season as a player for the Montreal Alouettes and one year with the Toronto Argonauts. In 1985, Carlos became a counselor for Palm Springs High School in California. In 1998, both Smith and Carlos were honored in a ceremony to commemorate their protest at the 1968 Olympic Games, and the two reunited again at the funeral for Australian runner Peter Norman's funeral ceremony in 2006.

John Carlos was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on March 29, 2006.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with John Carlos was conducted by Paul Brock on March 29, 2006, in Palm Springs, California, and was recorded on 3 Betacame SP videocassettes. Track and field athlete John Carlos (1945 -) is most well known for being the bronze medalist for the 200-meter race during the 1968 Olympic games and raising a black power salute on the podium with Tommie Smith.

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:

Carlos, John, 1945-

Brock, Paul (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Carlos, John, 1945- --Interviews

African American athletes--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Track and Field Athlete

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 John Carlos, March 29, 2006. 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 Carlos, Section A2006_055_001_001, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

John Carlos was born on June 5, 1945 in New York, New York to Vioris Lawrence and Earl Vanderbilt Carlos. His mother emigrated from Cuba in the 1920s and settled in New York City. She worked as a domestic in homes and medical offices before becoming a nurse at Bellevue Hospital. Carlos' father was born in 1895 in South Camden, Carolina and migrated to New York City. He operated a shoe business and candy store out of the family residence near the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem. Carlos describes his earliest childhood memories on Lenox Avenue, the heart of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1930s. He grew up with four siblings and later reunited with his half-brother. Carlos attended P.S. 5 and Frederick Douglass Junior High School and struggled with a learning disability. He recalls questioning the lack of African American media representation as an elementary school student. His earliest childhood memories include seeing the construction of a housing project in Harlem and the developing drug crisis of the late 1950s.

Public schools--New York (State).

African American students--Education (Elementary)--New York (State).

Learning disabled children--Ability testing--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with John Carlos, Section A2006_055_001_002, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

John Carlos talks about his aggressive behavior as an elementary school student at P.S. 5 in New York, New York because of racial discrimination. Carlos also describes the drug crisis in Harlem, New York during the 1950s. White firemen and police officers exercised excessive force against Harlem's African American residents and describes the time he spent time with addicts and was better able to understand the psychosocial effects of drug abuse. Carlos' father, a black storeowner, experienced discrimination from white business suppliers and owners. Inspired by Robin Hood, Carlos raided food from freight trains as a teenager to feed Harlem's hungry. He organized a boycott of student lunches at Haaren High School in Midtown Manhattan, New York for better quality—and cleanly prepared—meals. Carlos describes a vision of the Olympics he experienced as a child as well as his search for religious faith.

Racism--Harlem--New York.

Drug addiction--United States--Social conditions.

World War, 1939-1945--African American soldiers.

Social life and customs--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with John Carlos, Section A2006_055_001_003, TRT: 0:15:50 ?

John Carlos explains his expulsion from Haaren High School in Midtown Manhattan, New York after organizing a student lunch boycott. He briefly attended a New York City Catholic high school until a disagreement with the mother superior led him to enroll at Machine and Metal Trades High School. Carlos describes his athletic ambitions. He was interested in a professional swimming career. However, his father, Earl Vanderbilt Carlos, warned him that discrimination would restrict his training opportunities. He also was interested in professional boxing; Carlos competed in the New York Golden Gloves intra-city boxing tournaments and received an offer to train professionally, but his mother objected to this option. Instead, Carlos ran track at Machine and Metal Trades High School and joined the New York Pioneers Track and Field Club, the first

interracial track team in the United States.

African American students--Education (Elementary)--New York (State).

African American track and field athletes--Sprinting.