

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Harriette Cole

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Cole, Harriette
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Harriette Cole,
Dates:	November 7, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:42:11).
Abstract:	Talent coach and model Harriette Cole (1961 -) is the creative director of Ebony magazine. She is also founder and creative director of Harriette Cole Productions, an etiquette and life coaching company; is the author of several books on etiquette and lifestyle; and writes a nationwide advice column. Cole was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 7, 2006, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_131
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Author and writer Harriette Cole was born on March 14, 1961 in Baltimore, Maryland. Her mother, Doris Freeland Cole, was an educator, and her father was the Honorable Harry A. Cole, Maryland's first African American Republican Assistant Attorney General and its elected State Senator and judge appointed to the Maryland's Court of Appeals.

Growing up in Baltimore, Maryland, Cole attended Dickey Hill Elementary School, Greenspring Junior High School and Western High School where she played the violin, sang in the choir and became interested in modeling. She graduated in 1979 and was accepted into the honors liberal arts program at Howard University where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa, summa cum laude in 1983.

While at Howard University, Cole worked in retail and as a model. She participated in the Congressional Black Caucus fashion show which began her successful runway modeling career. Unsure of her career track, Cole first worked as a secretary on Capitol Hill after graduation. In late 1983, Cole left Washington, D.C. to accept a position at *Essence* magazine. During her eleven year tenure there, she held the positions of fashion director and lifestyle editor. Cole served as the founding editorial director of *Uptown* magazine and the editor of *American Legacy Woman* magazine.

In 1993, Cole wrote her first book, *Jumping the Broom: The African American Wedding Planner*, which is in its second edition. Cole has appeared on many national television and radio programs and in many major magazines and newspapers. She is a contributor to NBC's Today Show.

Cole is president and creative director of Harriette Cole Media, Inc. (formerly Profundities, Inc.), the life coaching, style and literary production company she founded in 1995. For nearly twenty years, Cole has offered media training services to a broad range of individuals and institutions. She has supported the development of artists for

Universal Records, J Records, Motown, Warner Music and Def Jam and worked with entertainers including Queen Latifah, JoJo, Alicia Keys, Mary J. Blige, Erykah Badu, Tamar, Carl Thomas, Shontelle, Hal Linton, Cara Salimando and Neon Hitch.

Cole is a nationally syndicated columnist of “Sense and Sensitivity,” an etiquette and relationship management advice column targeting diverse audiences. Cole is also a bestselling author of seven books including *How to Be: A Guide to Living with Grace and Integrity* as well as the preeminent African-American Wedding Planner, *Jumping the Broom* and its sequel *Vows*, and *108 stitches: Words We Live By*. Cole serves on the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Multicultural Audience Development Initiative.

During her tenure as creative director of *Ebony* magazine and then the added responsibility of editor in chief, Cole produced groundbreaking covers and features on President Obama, Michelle Obama, Michael Jackson and Prince. Cole co-executive produced a television special about the entertainer Prince that aired on The Africa Channel and was nominated for an NAACP Award.

In 2012, Cole introduced her line of hand-crocheted accessories, 108 stitches, during New York Fashion Week.

Cole is married to fashion photographer George Chinsee, and they have one daughter.

Harriette Cole was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on November 7, 2006.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Harriette Cole was conducted by Denise Gines on November 7, 2006, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Talent coach and model Harriette Cole (1961 -) is the creative director of *Ebony* magazine. She is also founder and creative director of Harriette Cole Productions, an etiquette and life coaching company; is the author of several books on etiquette and lifestyle; and writes a nationwide advice column.

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:

- Cole, Harriette
- Gines, Denise (Interviewer)
- Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

Subjects:

- African Americans--Interviews
- Cole, Harriette--Interviews
- African American fashion editors--Interviews
- African American models--Interviews
- African American women authors--Interviews
- Advice columnists--Interviews
- Image consultants--Interviews

Organizations:

- HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)
- The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

- Magazine Editor
- Model

HistoryMakers® Category:

- MediaMakers|StyleMakers

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 Harriette Cole, November 7, 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 Harriette Cole, Section A2006_131_001_001, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Harriette Cole was born on March 14, 1961 in Baltimore, Maryland. Her mother, Doris Irene Freeland Cole, was born on October 28, 1929 in Baltimore to Carrie Elizabeth Alsup Freeland and Harvey Freeland. Carrie Freeland was born in Calvert County, Maryland in 1889 and worked as a domestic for art collectors Claribel Cone and Etta Cone in Baltimore. Harvey Freeland was a porter. Cole's father, Harry Augustus Cole, was born on January 21, 1921 in Washington, D.C. to Rosina Thompson Cole and Richard Baker Cole. Rosina Cole was from South Carolina, and moved to Baltimore with her five children after leaving her husband. Harry Cole attended Morgan State College and the University of Maryland School of Law in Baltimore and became a prominent Republican politician and lawyer. He wrote a column for the Baltimore Afro-American and was a Lieutenant in the U.S. Army during World War II. Cole has two sisters, Susan and Stephanie, and she reflects on what her father taught them about respectability and appearances.

African American fashion editors--Interviews.

African American models--Interviews.

African American women authors--Interviews.

Advice columnists--Interviews.

Image consultants--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Harriette Cole, Section A2006_131_001_002, TRT: 0:29:48 ?

Harriette Cole recalls how her parents met. After working as a criminal and civil rights attorney, her father became an assistant attorney general, the first black

state senator in Maryland, and the first black judge on the Maryland Court of Appeals. Cole recalls her father mentoring HistoryMaker Robert Mack Bell on how he should dress, as well as her father's experience with diabetes and death in 1999. Cole grew up on Forest Park Avenue in Baltimore, Maryland and attended Dickey Hill Elementary School, Greenspring Junior High School, and Western High School. She became interested in writing as a way of escaping being teased in school for her shyness and for getting good grades. Cole remembers being bussed to school and the constant community surveillance of her actions. She also recalls learning about her namesake maternal great-great-grandmother, Harriette Ann, who bought her own freedom from slavery and walked from Calvert County, Maryland to Annapolis, Maryland to buy the freedom of her husband and son.

Video Oral History Interview with Harriette Cole, Section A2006_131_001_003, TRT: 0:29:05 ?

Harriette Cole recalls her family's elegant celebrations, including Thanksgiving and Christmas meals and her father's New Year's Eve birthday parties, and reflects on what she learned about appearances and etiquette from these occasions. Cole also describes eating crabs with her family during the summer, and the sights and smells of her upper middle class black neighborhood in Baltimore, Maryland. She remembers hearing about the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and fearing for the safety of her father and grandmother during the 1968 riots. Cole attended Dickey Elementary School and was bussed to Greenspring Junior High School, where she joined the choir and learned violin. She also attended the all-girls Western High School, where she excelled as a student, joined the modeling club, and attended her high school prom. She graduated near the top of her class in 1979 and was awarded a Peabody Fellowship.

Video Oral History Interview with Harriette Cole, Section A2006_131_001_004, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Harriette Cole joined the modeling club during her senior year at Western High School in Baltimore, Maryland. After graduating in 1979, Cole enrolled at Towson State University in Baltimore, Maryland. Unable to escape her sister's shadow during her first year of college, Cole enrolled at Howard University in Washington, D.C. in 1980 without her father's knowledge. She majored in English and became a model at Howard University fashion shows and the Congressional Black Caucus Fashion Shows, where she met HistoryMaker Rashid Silvera. Cole also earned an Academic Achievement Award and pledged the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. In 1983, she received her B.A. degree and worked in the office of Congresswoman Barbara Boxer. In the same year, she began freelance fashion writing and became an assistant lifestyle editor at Essence Magazine. In 1990, Cole was asked by HistoryMaker Susan Taylor to be editor of the fashion department at Essence. She also recalls being approached to write her first book, "Jumping the Broom."

Video Oral History Interview with Harriette Cole, Section A2006_131_001_005, TRT: 0:29:08 ?

Harriette Cole published her first book, "Jumping the Broom," in 1993, one month before her marriage to HistoryMaker George Chinsee. Cole recalls meeting Chinsee through working together on the book "Songs of My People." From 1990 until 1995, Cole was the fashion editor at Essence magazine, where she was inspired by HistoryMaker Susan Taylor to embrace a range of natural high styles and to dress more plus sized models. In 1995, Cole left Essence and founded Profundities, Inc. She met HistoryMakers Keith Clinkscales and Roy Johnson, and worked with Johnson to develop Savoy magazine while also writing her book "How to Be." Cole also met Andre Harrell of Uptown Records and began coaching singers like Mary J. Blige and Erykah Badu on their media

appearances. Cole describes her business' growth, which includes her books, the syndicated column "Sense and Sensitivity," American Legacy Woman and Uptown magazines, hosting a TV show, and appearing on the Oprah Winfrey Show. She also reflects upon her regrets.

Video Oral History Interview with Harriette Cole, Section A2006_131_001_006, TRT: 0:14:00 ?

Harriette Cole reflects on the importance of community for nurturing talent, her values, how she would like to be remembered, her hopes and concerns for the African American community, and her legacy.