

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Antonio Anderson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Anderson, Antonio D.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Antonio Anderson,
Dates:	December 12, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:19:31).
Abstract:	Personal care entrepreneur and hairstylist Antonio Anderson (1965 -) founded Styles by Antonio, a hair salon in Decatur, Georgia, and invented the Gabriel Feeding Pad Break-Away. Anderson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 12, 2006, in Conyers, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_163
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Antonio Darcy Anderson was born in Atlanta, Georgia on January 22, 1965. Anderson's parents are Linda Johnson, an Atlanta businesswoman, and Bennie Anderson, an original member of the music group, the Drifters. Anderson's mother raised their family as a single parent until she married Herman Johnson, who had a significant impact on Anderson.

Anderson graduated from Southwest DeKalb High School in 1983. He immediately began to train as a hairstylist with Frank Arnold at Arnold's International in Atlanta, Georgia. While attending school and working full-time at ITE, an electrical company, Anderson also apprenticed with David Fields of Daweed's Hair Design in Lithonia, Georgia. He trained as well at Pivot Point International System of Cosmetology Science and became proficient as a colorist.

After graduating from Arnold's International, Anderson performed platform work for Pro-Line International, Inc. as one of its youngest instructors. In 1986, with his training, family support and an established clientele, Anderson opened Styles by San Antonio in Decatur, Georgia when he was twenty-one years old. The salon continues to service clients after twenty years.

In 2001, after his third child Gabriel was born, Anderson, with the help of his wife, Raquel, designed the Gabriel Feeding Pad Break-Away to help parents multi-task while bottle feeding their baby. An appearance on the *Oprah Winfrey Show* landed them a contract with the Babies R Us Company. The Gabriel product line is sold all over the world.

Anderson resides in Conyers, Georgia with his wife and three children.

Anderson was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on December 12, 2006.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Antonio Anderson was conducted by Denise Gines on December 12, 2006, in Conyers, Georgia, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Personal care entrepreneur and hairstylist Antonio Anderson (1965 -) founded Styles by Antonio, a hair salon in Decatur, Georgia, and invented the Gabriel Feeding Pad Break-Away.

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:

Anderson, Antonio D.

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Anderson, Antonio D.--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Beauty Shop Owner

Hair Stylist

HistoryMakers® Category:

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 Antonio Anderson, December 12, 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 Antonio Anderson, Section A2006_163_001_001, TRT: 0:27:30
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Antonio Anderson was born on January 22, 1965 in Atlanta, Georgia to Linda Johnson and Bennie Anderson. His maternal great-grandmother was Cherokee, and his maternal grandmother, Mable Avery, was a domestic. Anderson had

little contact with his paternal family. His father, a singer in the Drifters, was often away on tour, and visited Anderson only on birthdays and holidays. Anderson's parents divorced when he was young, and he was raised by his mother, maternal grandmother and aunts in Atlanta's Englewood Manor housing projects. His mother worked at Rich's Department Store and later at Liberty Mutual Group to support their family, which included Anderson's younger sister and two older brothers. The children often saved their bus fare in order to buy a Christmas gift for their mother. Although the family struggled financially, Anderson remembers their Christmas celebrations as joyful. Anderson's mother married Herman Johnson in 1970, and Anderson's stepfather became his father figure.

Video Oral History Interview with Antonio Anderson, Section A2006_163_001_002, TRT: 0:30:10
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Antonio Anderson grew up in Englewood Manor, a housing project in Atlanta, Georgia. There, Anderson played football and basketball with his cousins, and aspired to be a professional athlete. He occasionally witnessed violence between his neighbors, but never drug use. After his mother, Linda Johnson, remarried, Anderson's family was one of few two-parent households in Englewood Manor. His stepfather, Herman Johnson, took the family, including Anderson's maternal grandmother and cousins, on their first vacation. They visited Pensacola, Florida, where Anderson learned to fish and swim. Through the Cub Scouts, he participated in other outdoor activities like camping. In Atlanta, Anderson was a member of The Move of God Church, Inc., and excelled at D.H. Stanton Elementary School. When he was in the sixth grade, his family moved to the Eastwyck Village neighborhood of Decatur, Georgia. There, he attended Kelley Lake Elementary School through the seventh grade, when he graduated to Columbia High School.

Video Oral History Interview with Antonio Anderson, Section A2006_163_001_003, TRT: 0:30:10
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Antonio Anderson's family bought their first home in Decatur, Georgia when he was in the eighth grade. At Decatur's Columbia High School, Anderson interacted with white students for the first time. Southwest DeKalb High School, where he transferred in the tenth grade, was also integrated. During the summers, he was required to work and keep a strict curfew. Anderson had a natural talent for hair styling; and, upon graduating high school, enrolled at the Arnold International School of Cosmetology in Atlanta, Georgia. There, he was mentored by Frank Arnold, and learned the Pivot Point International haircutting method. He initially made a living at an electrical plant, but quit to focus on his career as a hair stylist. Anderson interned at Daweed's Hair Designs in Lithonia, Georgia. The owner, David Fields, soon hired him as a full time stylist. At twenty years old, Anderson entered his first competition at the Bronner Brothers Hair Show. Although he lost, he became committed to mastering the art of hairstyling.

Video Oral History Interview with Antonio Anderson, Section A2006_163_001_004, TRT: 0:30:20
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Antonio Anderson worked at Daweed's Hair Designs in Lithonia, Georgia for one year; and then, in 1986, opened Styles by San Antonio in Decatur, Georgia. Anderson recruited a friend who was a seamstress, and a client who was a professional model, and entered the Bronner Brothers International Beauty Show. He won the five thousand dollar prize, and the publicity expanded his business. Anderson then began working with hairstyling instructor Chuck Garland; and, with his help, obtained a position as the youngest platform stylist

at Pro-Line International, Inc. In this role, he demonstrated the company's new products to stylists. In 1991, Anderson married Raquel Lett-Anderson, who briefly worked at his salon. Anderson's experiences as a stylist inspired him to invent a device to apply relaxer more efficiently. He taught himself pump mechanics, and created a prototype of the Quick Dispensary 2000 tool. Anderson talks about the patent application process, which took two and half years to complete.

Video Oral History Interview with Antonio Anderson, Section A2006_163_001_005, TRT: 0:28:00
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Antonio Anderson met with representatives at Revlon, Inc., Soft Sheen Products, Inc. and Clairol Inc. to find investors for the Quick Dispensary 2000. None committed to funding his invention, because of its high production cost. Anderson hoped to finance the project himself, and sought out buyers in the high-end hair care markets, where the device would aid stylists less familiar with relaxing techniques. However, the cost of production was prohibitively high, and Anderson was forced to retire his idea. Next, he invented a relaxer caddy, which he and his stepfather, Herman Johnson, produced in his mother's garage. The caddies sold well, but Anderson was unable to find a company to produce it more efficiently. He also invented a garbage bag dispenser, which he presented to Rubbermaid, although they did not produce it. In 2000, Anderson's third child, Christian Gabriel Anderson, was born. While caring for the baby, Anderson was inspired to create the Gabriel Feeding Pad.

Video Oral History Interview with Antonio Anderson, Section A2006_163_001_006, TRT: 0:29:10
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Antonio Anderson invented the Gabriel Feeding Pad to hold a baby's bottle so that its parent can multitask. He created the first prototype from Velcro and a burp cloth, and his mother sewed further renditions. When a stranger complimented the invention, Anderson and his wife decided to manufacture and sell it. They located a manufacturer in Colorado to develop it as a commercial product, and launched a successful investment fundraising campaign. The Gabriel Feeding Pad sold out at the American Baby Faire trade show, but Anderson was unable to secure a contract with Babies "R" Us. He redesigned the product to work for breastfeeding as well, and marketed it as the Gabriel Feeding Pad Break-Away. At a buyer's fair, he met the president of Toys "R" Us, who said the company would consider buying the invention. Then, Anderson was invited to present his invention on 'The Oprah Winfrey Show.' Twenty minutes before the show aired, Anderson received a call from Babies "R" Us, who agreed to distribute the product.

Video Oral History Interview with Antonio Anderson, Section A2006_163_001_007, TRT: 0:24:11
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Antonio Anderson secured a distribution contract with Babies "R" Us for the Gabriel Feeding Pad Break-Away after appearing on 'The Oprah Winfrey Show.' The product sold out within its first week of distribution. He and his wife, Raquel Lett-Anderson, called 'The Oprah Winfrey Show' to express their appreciation for the publicity, and were invited to appear on the show again. They received thousands of emails requesting advice about inventing and marketing products. The experience inspired Anderson and his wife to write 'Take it to the Market! The Invention Process Made Easy,' and to create workshops for aspiring inventors. At the time of the interview, the Gabriel Feeding Pad Break-Away was sold on Target.com and Walmart.com, and Anderson was anticipating a deal with Walmart stores. He describes his plans for his salon and career, and talks about the impact of his success on his

religious faith. Anderson describes how he would like to be remembered, and concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.