

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Donald L. Hense

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Hense, Donald L., 1942-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Donald L. Hense,
Dates:	April 23, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:53:35).
Abstract:	Businessman and educator Donald L. Hense (1942 -) founded Friendship Public Charter Schools in the Washington, D.C. area, and served as vice president of the National Urban League, among other administrative posts. Hense was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 23, 2007, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_155
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Educator and businessman Donald L. Hense was born on July 4, 1942 in St. Louis, Missouri to Ivy and Fred Hense. Hense played tennis and baseball and was the Sunday school president at his church. He was president of the Junior Red Cross while in singing and acting classes at the neighborhood recreation center. Hense received his B.A. degree from Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia and attended graduate school at Stanford University in California. He was a Rockefeller intern in economics at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, a Merrill Scholar at the University of Ghana, a Ford Foundation Fellow at Stanford University, and a lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley.

Hense served as Executive Director of the Friendship House for several years. The Friendship House is a 100 year-old social service agency that helps children, families and older adults. During his tenure, he redesigned, revitalized and created committees and an education task force to research and evaluate the issues affecting youth. Out of the education task force came the recommendation that Friendship House become a charter school. In 1998, Hense founded Friendship Public Charter Schools with the assistance of Chris Whittle, founder of the Edison School. The schools serve more than 3,900 students on four campuses from kindergarten through twelfth grade. 96% of the graduates have gone on to attend college. Hense serves as the chairman of the Center for Youth and Family Investment, an organization which provides extended learning programs to more than 2,000 children daily. Hense is also the co-founder of the Bridges to Friendship Initiative, which provided the impetus for revitalization of the Navy Yard and was recognized by Vice President Al Gore as a model community initiative. Hense has served as Vice President of the National Urban League, Director of the Development of Children's Defense Fund, and Director of Governmental Relations at Howard University, Boston University and Dartmouth College. He also serves on the Board of the Center for Education Reform and the D.C. Arts and Humanities Collaborative and is the treasurer of the D.C. Association of Charter Schools. On June 22, 2011 Hense was honored by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS) as an inductee into the National Charter Schools Hall of Fame during the General Session of the National Charter Schools Conference in Atlanta, Georgia.

Donald L. Hense was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on April 23, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Donald L. Hense was conducted by Denise Gines on April 23, 2007, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Businessman and educator Donald L. Hense (1942 -) founded Friendship Public Charter Schools in the Washington, D.C. area, and served as vice president of the National Urban League, among other administrative posts.

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:

Hense, Donald L., 1942-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Hense, Donald L., 1942- --Interviews

African American businesspeople--Interviews.

African American educators--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Nonprofit 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 Donald L. Hense, April 23, 2007. 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 Donald L. Hense, Section A2007_155_001_001, TRT: 0:29:15 ?

Donald L. Hense was born on July 4, 1942 in St. Louis, Missouri to Lillie Ivy Hense and Fred Hense. His maternal grandparents, Marion Ivy and Julia Ivy, were from Kennett, Missouri. His father was born in Walnut Ridge, Arkansas, and met and married his mother in Kennett. They moved to St. Louis, where Hense's father obtained a position at the Krey Packing Company; and raised five children in a middle class African American neighborhood near the black business district on Eastern Avenue. Hense began his education at the Lincoln School, where his father visited his classroom every Monday; and went on to attend Vashon High School. He joined the school choir and student council, and aspired to become an ambassador after reading Gerri Major's Society World column in Jet magazine. Hense decided to attend Morehouse College, where Benjamin Mays, Mordecai Johnson and Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. were faculty and alumni, after hearing them speak at a church convention.

African American children--Missouri--Saint Louis.

African American neighborhoods--Missouri--Saint Louis--History--20th century.

Segregation in education--Missouri--Saint Louis.

African Americans--Missouri--Saint Louis--Social life and customs.

Morehouse College (Atlanta, Ga.).

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

Video Oral History Interview with Donald L. Hense, Section A2007_155_001_002, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

Donald L. Hense matriculated in 1961 at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, where he was influenced by college president Benjamin Mays, and economics professors Edward Buchanan Williams and Marcia Halvorsen. Hense joined the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, where he was active in recruitment, peer tutoring programs and governance. He also coordinated marches to protest the Vietnam War on behalf of the United States National Students Association, and served as the chief usher for Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.'s funeral in 1968. That year, Hense, who excelled academically, was among the first group of Charles E. Merrill, Jr. scholars to travel to Africa, where he studied at the University of Ghana, and met sociologist C. Eric Lincoln and economist W. Arthur Lewis. In 1969, he was selected by the Rockefeller Foundation for a fellowship at Cornell University under economist Alfred E. Kahn, whom he assisted with the paper 'Integration and Competition in the Petroleum Industry.'

African American families—Missouri--Saint Louis.

Morehouse College (Atlanta, Ga.).

Mays, Benjamin E. (Benjamin Elijah), 1894-1984.

African Americans--Social life and customs--Georgia--Atlanta.

African American civil rights workers.

African American students.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald L. Hense, Section A2007_155_001_003, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Donald L. Hense graduated from Morehouse College with a degree in economics and political science in 1970. He enrolled in a graduate program at Stanford University; but left in 1973, as the faculty lacked interest in his dissertation on historically black colleges. He was then hired by Howard University to establish its governmental relations department, which worked to secure research funding. In 1979, he organized a conference for Operation PUSH in Washington, D.C., and established a governmental relations department at Boston University. In 1981, Hense founded Applied Information

Management, Inc., a firm that designed billing software. He later established an office in Washington, D.C. for Dartmouth College; and, in 1986, joined Prairie View A&M University as the vice president of development. In 1988, he accepted the same position at the National Urban League, where he worked with hip hop artists like Mohandas "Kool Moe Dee" Dewese to raise funds for the organization's youth programs.

African American universities and colleges.

African American businesspeople--New York (State)--New York.

African American businesspeople--Washington (D.C.).

Howard University.

African American students--California--Stanford.

Video Oral History Interview with Donald L. Hense, Section A2007_155_001_004, TRT: 0:26:30 ?

Donald L. Hense left the National Urban League in 1990, and moved from New York City to Washington, D.C. to become the director of development at the Arena Stage theater. In 1993, he collaborated with dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater to raise funds for the Whitman-Walker Clinic, which offered HIV/AIDS healthcare. Then, Hense served under Marian Wright Edelman and Lisa Sullivan at the Children's Defense Fund. He became the CEO of the Friendship House Association, Inc. in 1996; and, in 1998, opened the first two schools in the Friendship Public Charter Schools system. Hense went on to open multiple campuses in low income neighborhoods; and, by emphasizing the social and economic factors of education, achieved a 90 percent graduation rate. Hense describes his hopes for the African American community, and his message to future generations. He reflects upon his life and how he would like to be remembered, and then concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.

African American business enterprises.

Charter schools--Washington (D.C.)

African American educators--Washington (D.C.).

African American neighborhoods--Washington (D.C.).

Anacostia (Washington, D.C.)--Social conditions.