

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Otis L. Story, Sr.

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Story, Otis L., 1951-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Otis L. Story, Sr.,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 20, 2012, March 27, 2017 and September 12, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007, 2012 and 2017
<b>Physical Description:</b>	14 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (6:51:19).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Chief executive officer Otis L. Story, Sr. (1951 - ) was president and CEO of the Grady Health System in Atlanta, Georgia. Story was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 20, 2012, March 27, 2017 and September 12, 2007, in Atlanta, Georgia and New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_256
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Healthcare chief executive Otis Leon Story, Sr. was born on November 17, 1951 in Anniston, Alabama to Martha Lou and Tom Elbert Story, Sr. Story earned his B.A. degree in the social sciences from Cornell University in 1976 and his M.A degree at the University of Chicago in 1977. Story continued his education at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where he earned his second M.A. degree in hospital and health administration.

Story began his career at Ochsner Foundation Hospital in New Orleans, Louisiana, where he was appointed as the first African American administrator in the hospital's history. From 1985 to 1990, he worked as an administrator at the University of Alabama at Birmingham-University Hospital; and, in 1990, became the chief operating officer at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of Newark, New Jersey. From 1996 to 1998, Story served as the associate executive officer of The Health Alliance of Greater Cincinnati. Then, Story began working as the executive vice president and chief operating officer for the Memorial Health University Medical Center in Savannah, Georgia. Appointed by the board of directors, Story was named interim president and chief executive officer at Shands Jacksonville Medical Center in 2001. From there, Story served as the vice president of operations of the Cooper Health System in Camden, New Jersey. In 2003, he was hired as the executive director at St. Vincent Catholic Medical Center in New York City, and worked to amend the center's bankruptcy status. Story was appointed as the president and chief executive officer of the Grady Health System in Atlanta, Georgia in 2007. In 2012, the Jefferson County Commission in Birmingham, Alabama hired Story to reorganize Cooper Green Mercy Hospital. From 2015 to 2017, Story served as the chief executive officer of East Orange General Hospital in East Orange, New Jersey.

In addition to his other accomplishments, Story also completed a fellowship with the National Association of Public Hospitals. He served as a member of the Regional Policy Boards at the American Hospital Association as well as The Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knight Hospitaller. Story lives with his wife, Ava, in Hoover, Alabama. They have three children together: Jasmyn, Avana, and Prince James.

Otis L. Story, Sr. was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on September 12, 2007, March 20, 2012 and March 27, 2017.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Otis L. Story, Sr. was conducted by Denise Gines and Larry Crowe on March 20, 2012, March 27, 2017 and September 12, 2007, in Atlanta, Georgia and New York, New York, and was recorded on 14 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. Chief executive officer Otis L. Story, Sr. (1951 - ) was president and CEO of the Grady Health System in Atlanta, Georgia.

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## 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Story, Otis L., 1951-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Story, Otis L., 1951- --Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## Occupations:

Chief Executive Officer

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

MedicalMakers

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## 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 Otis L. Story, Sr., March 20, 2012, March 27, 2017 and September 12, 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Otis L. Story, Sr., Section A2007\_256\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Otis L. Story, Sr. was born on November 17, 1951 in Anniston, Alabama to Martha Wilson Story and Tom Story, Sr. Story's paternal great-grandfather, Zack Story, Jr., was born in Eutaw, Alabama to an African American woman and a wealthy, white man named Zack Story, Sr. From his father, Story's paternal great-grandfather inherited a large property that was rich in timber. Story's maternal great-grandfather, George Curry, was an African American railroad worker; and his maternal great-grandmother, Martha Curry, was a Cherokee woman. She raised Story's mother and uncle, Otis Wilson, in the Marvin Hill section of Anniston; while their mother, Story's maternal grandmother Lois Wilson, worked as a domestic for a white family. Story's maternal grandmother was also a bootlegger, and operated a drinking establishment in her home, where Story's parents met. They raised Story in Anniston's close-knit African American community, where they attended the Gaines Chapel A.M.E. Church.

African American families--Alabama.

African Americans--Employment--Alabama.

Video Oral History Interview with Otis L. Story, Sr., Section A2007\_256\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Otis L. Story, Sr. grew up in segregated Anniston, Alabama, and was raised by his parents alongside his eleven siblings in a shotgun house with a tin roof. Story's family was well regarded in Anniston's black community, where his maternal grandmother, Lois Wilson, ran a speakeasy. She also worked as a domestic for a local Jewish woman, Alice Powell. Story's father and paternal uncles were also notable members of the community, because they were all entrepreneurs at a time when most men in worked in the steel mills and pipe shops. Instead, Story's father was a clothes presser in Anniston, and his uncles owned businesses in Chicago, Illinois. Because Story's paternal great-great-grandfather, Zack Story, Sr., was a white man, Story had a number of white relatives, whom he met at a funeral at the age of ten years old. This encounter was the first time that Story witnessed a positive interaction between African Americans and the white community in Alabama.

Segregation--Southern States.

Southern States--Race relations.

African American families--Social conditions.

Miscegenation.

Video Oral History Interview with Otis L. Story, Sr., Section A2007\_256\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Otis L. Story, Sr. grew up in an all-black area of Anniston, Alabama, where his family, including his eleven siblings, shared a double shotgun house with their neighbors. Many of the local residents were elderly, and served as mentors to Story's parents, Martha Wilson Story and Tom Story, Sr. While the majority of Anniston's African American citizens worked at the steel mills or the nearby Fort McClellan, Story's father was employed as a clothes presser and at The Kroger Company grocery store. His father was also a gambler, and often placed bets with nearly expired meat instead of money while gaming at Fort McClellan. Story was interested in sports from an early age. He often played baseball and football in the streets with his friends, and aspired to become a professional athlete. During the sixth grade, Story began suffering from seizures, and was forced to quit playing sports. He eventually recovered under his mother's care.

African American children--Alabama.

African American teachers--Alabama.

African American women--Employment.

African Americans--Family relationships.

Convulsions in children.

Seizures.

Video Oral History Interview with Otis L. Story, Sr., Section A2007\_256\_002\_004, TRT: 4:28:39 ?

Otis L. Story, Sr. was a child during the early days of the Civil Rights Movement in Anniston, Alabama, where he and his peers were frequently attacked by white children with dogs. In 1961, a bus of Freedom Riders was bombed by members of Anniston's Ku Klux Klan (KKK) chapter, and Story witnessed the aftermath of the incident. Several members of the KKK chapter also participated in the attack on Nat King Cole in Birmingham, Alabama; and the group organized attacks on Story's father, who successfully defended himself when a gunman confronted him in a taxicab. Story's father seized the gun, and shot the attacker; and was quickly released from jail, because the shooting was an embarrassment for the white man. During this time, Story was a student at the all-black South Highland Elementary School. When he was about to enter middle school, his parents decided to remove him from the turmoil of Alabama's newly integrated school system, and sent him to live with his maternal uncle and older siblings in New York City.

Video Oral History Interview with Otis L. Story, Sr., Section A2007\_256\_002\_005, TRT: 5:30:56 ?

Otis L. Story, Sr. moved to live with his older siblings and maternal uncle, Otis Wilson, in Queens, New York. There, he attended P.S. 142, Shimer Junior High School, a predominantly African American school, where he excelled academically and played bass in the school band. When Story was about to begin high school in 1966, Queens integrated its school system. Story was offered a placement at John Bowne High School in Flushing, which was the only high school in New York City that specialized in agriculture at the time. There, he continued to excel as a student, and joined the basketball team. As a former football enthusiast, Story was initially an aggressive player, but eventually developed his skills as a rebounder. During this time, Story developed an aspiration to play basketball at the junior college level like his high school teammates, but his teachers and mentors encouraged him to attend a more prestigious school instead.

Video Oral History Interview with Otis L. Story, Sr., Section A2007\_256\_002\_006, TRT: 6:29:55 ?

Otis L. Story, Sr. became involved in educational politics while serving as student body president at John Bowne High School in Queens, New York. As a student activist, he was involved in the dispute between the United Federation of Teachers and the black community leaders of Brooklyn, New York in 1968. The following summer, Story was invited to attend a mediation retreat in Tarrytown, New York. While there, he met a dean from Cornell University; and, shortly afterwards, was scouted by the school's basketball team. Story also worked at the Playland arcade in Times Square during high school. By this time, Story's family had all migrated north to New York City. There, his father was diagnosed with diabetes, and his health quickly deteriorated. He was disabled by the effects of the disease; and, because of his race, was denied medical attention by the New York City hospital system. Story's three older siblings were often forced to argue with the hospital administrators to secure treatment for their father.

Video Oral History Interview with Otis L. Story, Sr., Section A2007\_256\_002\_007, TRT: 7:28:26 ?

Otis L. Story, Sr. matriculated in the early 1970s at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. Story enjoyed his coursework, and often audited additional classes. However, he and his peers of color faced discrimination from the faculty and administration. During freshmen orientation, they were warned that many

students would not graduate due to the stress and rigorous studies. Even so, the African American students developed a community at the Africana Studies and Research Center, where they were influenced by black artists and activists like Nikki Giovanni, Amiri Baraka and Reverend Benjamin Hooks. Story played on Cornell University's basketball team, along with several other African American students. During his sophomore year, the alumni began to complain that there were five African American starters; and, under pressure from the administration, the coach removed several black players from the starting lineup. In response, Story and his teammates boycotted the games, and eventually quit the team.

Video Oral History Interview with Otis L. Story, Sr., Section A2007\_256\_002\_008, TRT: 8:28:30 ?

Otis L. Story, Sr. received early admission to a graduate program at the University of Chicago during his junior year at Cornell University; but deferred his acceptance, as he wanted to study medicine. One year after graduating, Story visited friends in Chicago, who convinced him to enroll at the University of Chicago. While obtaining a master's degree in social science, Story boarded at his friends' homes, and worked for Larry Hawkins in the Office of Special Programs on campus. Story met his second wife, Ava McNair Story, while travelling for work in Atlanta, Georgia. He then completed a master's degree in health administration at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. There, he met his wife's uncle, county commissioner Chris McNair, whose daughter, Denise McNair, was one of the girls killed in the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. Story also remembers his father's death from complications of diabetes in 1974.

Video Oral History Interview with Otis L. Story, Sr., Section A2007\_256\_002\_009, TRT: 9:42:28 ?

Otis L. Story, Sr. completed his residency in hospital administration under David R. Pitts at the Ochsner Foundation Hospital in New Orleans, Louisiana. Story was the first African American resident at the hospital; and, although he faced discrimination from physicians and colleagues, his advisor was committed to his success. After graduating, he was hired as the hospital's first African American administrator. At this point in the interview, Story describes the role of a hospital administrator, who balances patient care with the hospital's operations and finances. While in New Orleans, Story became involved in local politics, and supported leaders like Mayor Ernest Morial and his son, future Mayor Marc H. Morial. Story went on to work for the hospital at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, where his sister underwent a kidney transplant; and then, in 1990, became the chief operating officer of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in Newark, New Jersey.

Video Oral History Interview with Otis L. Story, Sr., Section A2007\_256\_003\_010, TRT: 10:29:04 ?

Otis L. Story, Sr. married Ava McNair Story in 1991, while serving as the chief operating officer of the University Hospital in Newark, New Jersey. In the 1990s, the African American community in Newark experienced a surge in HIV/AIDS diagnoses and crack cocaine addiction. Under Story's administration, the hospital treated neonates born addicted to cocaine as well as pediatric AIDS patients. Initially confined to the black community, the illnesses received little funding for treatment or awareness until they began to affect white patients. In 1996, Story joined the Health Alliance of Greater Cincinnati, where he supervised the privatization of the University Hospital in Cincinnati, Ohio. There, Story lacked support from the African American community; and, after two years, moved to Savannah, Georgia, where he worked for Quorum Health Resources, LLC at the Memorial Health University Medical Center. This was

Story's first experience as an administrator at a for-profit organization.

Video Oral History Interview with Otis L. Story, Sr., Section A2007\_256\_003\_011, TRT: 11:28:23  
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Otis L. Story, Sr. worked for Quorum Health Resources, LLC as the chief administrator of the Memorial Health University Medical Center in Savannah, Georgia from 1998. With the approach of the new millennium, many Americans feared the effects of Y2K on the country's information infrastructure, especially for essential services like hospitals. In preparation, Story supervised a complete assessment of the medical center's records and data systems. At the time, Savannah's African American community was afflicted with a growth in HIV/AIDS diagnoses and cocaine addiction, with few resources available for those patients. Story left Savannah in 2001, and became the COO of the Shands Jacksonville Medical Center in Jacksonville, Florida. After being denied a promotion to CEO, Story returned to New Jersey as a healthcare administration consultant for The Endeavor Group. Story also talks about the healthcare reform proposals under President Richard Nixon, President William "Bill" Clinton and President Barack Obama.

Video Oral History Interview with Otis L. Story, Sr., Section A2007\_256\_003\_012, TRT: 12:21:18  
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Otis L. Story, Sr. became the CEO of the Grady Health System in Atlanta, Georgia at a time of turmoil for the hospital system. During the 2000s, the majority African American Fulton-DeKalb Hospital Authority was struggling against Atlanta's white business community for control of the Grady Health System. Unable to function in the hostile environment, Story left after less than one year, and moved to Birmingham, Alabama to manage the closure of the Cooper Green Hospital. Under his leadership, the hospital was not closed, but revitalized as a network of health clinics called the Cooper Green Mercy Health Services. In 2010, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act was signed into law by President Barack Obama. Story talks about the legislation, and compares it to the reforms undertaken by other Democratic administrations. In 2011, Story published an article, 'Preparing Safety Net Hospitals for Healthcare Reform,' in Becker's Hospital Review, in which he argued for the importance of safety net hospitals.

Video Oral History Interview with Otis L. Story, Sr., Section A2007\_256\_003\_013, TRT: 13:29:31  
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Otis L. Story, Sr. worked as a healthcare consultant in Birmingham, Alabama and Tampa, Florida, before accepting an opportunity to serve as the chief transition officer for Prospect Medical Holdings, Inc. from 2015. In this role, Story supervised the acquisition and renovation of the East Orange General Hospital in East Orange, New Jersey. After the purchase of the hospital was completed in March of 2016, he became its chief executive officer. Story worked to address the disparities in East Orange's medical facilities, including the absence of women's health centers and the lack of gynecological care for geriatric patients. Along with women's health, Story also worked to improve the care of patients with behavioral health issues using the diagnostic methods of Dr. David Satcher and Dr. Louis Sullivan. In addition, Story talks about the closure of hospitals in underserved communities. He reflects upon the need for healthcare reform, as well as his life and plans for the future.

Video Oral History Interview with Otis L. Story, Sr., Section A2007\_256\_003\_014, TRT: 14:25:09  
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Otis L. Story, Sr. had three children with his first wife, and three children with his second wife, Ava McNair Story. He reflects upon his legacy in the hospital

administration industry, including his community contributions. He also talks about his work at the University Hospital in Newark, New Jersey, where he streamlined the emergency room procedures and partnered with the FBI to provide on-site medical services during raids. Story concludes the interview by describing how he would like to be remembered.