

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with John W. Daniels, Jr.

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Daniels, John W.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with John W. Daniels, Jr.,
Dates:	November 26, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:17:02).
Abstract:	Corporate lawyer John W. Daniels, Jr. (1948 -) was the first African American appointed to lead a major law firm in Wisconsin when he was named chairman of Quarles & Brady L.L.P. in 2007. Daniels was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 26, 2007, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_330
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Noted corporate lawyer and civic leader John Windom Daniels, Jr. was born the second-oldest of eight children to John and Kathryn Townsel Daniels on June 11, 1948 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Daniels graduated from North Central College in Illinois with his B.A. degree in 1969 as the recipient of a National Science Foundation Fellowship. In 1970, at the age of twenty-one, Daniels became a Ford Foundation Fellow, and two years later, graduated from the University of Wisconsin with his M.S. degree.

Daniels then attended Harvard Law School, graduating with his J.D. degree in 1974. Soon after graduation, Daniels passed the bar exam, and began working for Quarles & Brady L.L.P., a full-service law firm with offices in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Madison, Wisconsin; Chicago, Illinois and Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona. Daniels was the first African American hired by the firm. In 1980, Daniels was elected to the American College of Real Estate Attorneys. The following year, Daniels became partner at Quarles & Brady. In 1983, Daniels was appointed Bar Examiner of the Wisconsin Board of Professional Competency by Wisconsin's governor. Daniels was named to the State of Wisconsin's Strategic Planning Council in 1987, and the following year, the Wisconsin Supreme Court appointed him to the Children's Hospital Foundation Review Committee for the Child Abuse Prevention Fund.

Daniels was listed as one of the best lawyers in America by Real Estate Law in 1993. In 1994, he became a partner and a member of the management committee of his firm. Daniels joined the Greater Milwaukee Foundation Board of Directors in 2004, one of the oldest and largest community foundations in the United States. 2007 marked a new milestone for Daniels, as he became the first African American appointed to lead a major law firm in Wisconsin when he was named chairman and managing partner of Quarles & Brady L.L.P.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with John W. Daniels, Jr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on November 26, 2007, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Corporate lawyer John W. Daniels, Jr. (1948 -) was the first African American appointed to lead a major law firm in Wisconsin when he was named chairman of Quarles & Brady L.L.P. in 2007.

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:

Daniels, John W.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Daniels, John W.--Interviews

African American lawyers--Wisconsin--Interviews

African American civic leaders--Wisconsin--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Corporate Lawyer

HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers

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 W. Daniels, Jr., November 26, 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 John W. Daniels, Jr., Section A2007_330_001_001, TRT: 0:30:01 ?

John W. Daniels, Jr. was born on June 11, 1948 in Birmingham, Alabama to Kathryn Townsel Daniels and John W. Daniels, Sr. His maternal grandfather, General Townsel, was a barber; and, with Daniels' maternal grandmother, Inez Harrison Townsel, raised eight children, including Daniels' mother, on a farm in

Huntsville, Alabama. They later moved to Birmingham, where his maternal grandfather served as a minister at the First Baptist Church West End, and his mother attended A.H. Parker High School. His paternal grandparents, Hattie Marshal Daniels and John Daniels, Sr., were sharecroppers on a farm in Dancy, Alabama, where they raised sixteen children. Daniels' father served in the U.S. Navy, while his mother studied to become a practical nurse at the University of Michigan School of Nursing. In Birmingham, she worked as a social workers' aide and teachers' aide in the public schools, and organized clothing and food drives. Daniels also describes his mother's conversion to the Church of God in Christ.

African American lawyers--Wisconsin--Interviews.

African American civic leaders--Wisconsin--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with John W. Daniels, Jr., Section A2007_330_001_002, TRT: 0:28:01 ?

John W. Daniels, Jr.'s father, John W. Daniels, Sr., served in the U.S. military, and then was hired as a porter on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. In Alabama, he met Daniel's mother, Kathryn Townsel Daniels, at a baseball game, and they soon married. Daniels was born with an atrophy on his right leg, and wore a brace until he was seven years old. He grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, where he excelled in math and science at the segregated Graymont Elementary School. In the mid-1950s, Daniels' parents purchased a home in a mostly white, working class neighborhood of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His father commuted to Chicago, Illinois each day to work as a mechanic at the naval ordnance, while Daniels studied at Milwaukee's McKinley School, and then the majority white Wells Junior High School. He talks about his family's relationship to the Church of God in Christ, including his mother's conversion, and the ministry of his brother, Bishop Sedgwick Daniels.

Video Oral History Interview with John W. Daniels, Jr., Section A2007_330_001_003, TRT: 0:28:10 ?

John W. Daniels, Jr. grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood on the northwest side of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where several middle class black families lived on his block. He attended the integrated Custer High School, and was active with the debate team, Latin club and student council. He encountered racial discrimination at the school, when an African American classmate was denied his place as homecoming king, because the administration did not want an interracial homecoming court. Daniels graduated as a member of the National Honors Society in 1966, and received a scholarship to North Central College in Naperville, Illinois. There, he joined the debate club, and developed an interest in business. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in science and business in 1969. Daniels describes the civil rights activism of his maternal grandfather, General Townsel, in Birmingham, Alabama; as well as the impact of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech at the March on Washington in 1963.

Video Oral History Interview with John W. Daniels, Jr., Section A2007_330_001_004, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

John W. Daniels, Jr. earned a master's degree in education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. After completing the preliminary exams for a Ph.D. degree there, he obtained an assistant deanship at the Saints Industrial and Literary School in Lexington, Mississippi, and began his dissertation. While in the South, Daniels witnessed Harvard University students' efforts to use the legal system to improve the education of minority students. He was inspired to study law, and was accepted to Harvard Law School in 1971. Daniels was influenced by his peers, including politicians Xavier Suarez and Edward F. Cox; Professor Derrick

A. Bell, Jr.; and assistant dean Walter J. Leonard. He became the president of the Harvard Black Law Students Association, and then the national vice president of the American Bar Association Law Student Division. He was the second African American ever elected to that position, and was mentored by his predecessor, attorney Dennis Archer.

Video Oral History Interview with John W. Daniels, Jr., Section A2007_330_001_005, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

John W. Daniels, Jr. graduated from Harvard Law School in 1974, and was actively recruited by majority white law firms that were looking to diversify their staffs. He considered joining a firm in Richmond, Virginia; but, after his wife was subjected to a discriminatory remark there, did not accept the offer. Instead, Daniels joined the firm of Quarles and Brady LLP in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Under the mentorship of attorney T. Michael Bolger, Daniels shifted his focus from labor to real estate law, and negotiated development projects like Milwaukee's BMO Harris Bradley Center. In 1981, he became a partner at the firm; and, in 1990, was selected to join its executive committee. Daniels continued his involvement in the American Bar Association, and joined the American College of Real Estate Lawyers group, where he was elected president in 2000. Daniels became the chairman of Quarles and Brady LLP in 2007; and, at that time, was the sole African American chairman among the nation's top two hundred law firms.

Video Oral History Interview with John W. Daniels, Jr., Section A2007_330_001_006, TRT: 0:28:10 ?

John W. Daniels became involved in the fast food franchise industry in 1984, when he invested in a Burger King restaurant with his sister, Valerie Daniels-Carter. They founded the V and J Holding Companies, Inc., where Daniels managed the business strategy as chairman of the board, while his sister ran the daily operations. Together, they developed over one hundred fast food restaurants. Through the company, Daniels funded academic scholarships, and created the Fellowship Open, an annual charity golf tournament. Daniels was active on a number of charitable boards in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, including the Greater Milwaukee Foundation and Ralph Evinrude Foundation. He also served as chairman of the board of North Milwaukee State Bank, a local African American institution; and raised money for his former classmate's, Ferne Yangyeitie Caulker's Ko-Thi Dance Company. Daniels describes the mentorship of attorney T. Michael Bolger, and his hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with John W. Daniels, Jr., Section A2007_330_001_007, TRT: 0:23:30 ?

John W. Daniels, Jr. describes his advice for aspiring young lawyers, and how he would like to be remembered. He also reflects upon his life, legacy and family. Daniels concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.