

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Frank Ski

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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>	Ski, Frank, 1964-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Frank Ski,
<b>Dates:</b>	February 26, 2008
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2008
<b>Physical Description:</b>	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:36:30).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Radio personality Frank Ski (1964 - ) worked as a radio disk jockey in Baltimore and Atlanta. Ski hosted the morning show of Atlanta's WVEE-FM radio station. Frank Ski Kids Foundation provided assistance to low income youth applicants and youth-serving agencies to expand opportunities for educational, athletic and cultural learning. Ski was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 26, 2008, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2008_029
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Radio personality Frank Ski was born Frank Rodriguez on May 9, 1964, to Sandra Brent and John Rodriguez in New York City. At an early age, Ski was placed into foster care by his mother. Then, at the age of six, the court ordered that he remain under the custody of his father in Miami, Florida. As an adolescent, Ski spent summers in New York City where he witnessed the birth of hip hop culture. He later became influenced by the hip hop lifestyle to become a local disk jockey.

After graduating from high school, Ski moved to Baltimore, Maryland, and attended the University of District of Columbia to pursue a career in law. It was there that Ski started his career in radio broadcasting as a part-time disc jockey. During his college years, Ski also worked as a paralegal. Then, in 1985, Ski was offered a position as an evening shift disc jockey with V-103 (then-called WEBB). He worked in that capacity for almost ten years and eventually became the co-host for the number one rated morning show, *The Frank and Jean Morning Show*.

In the early 1990s, Ski began remixing songs for Luke Skyywalker Records. He won the attention of music critics with his mix of the song, "Doo Doo Brown," in 1991, and in 1994, he made his acting debut by appearing in the film, *Detention*. Ski would later go on to appear in several other full-length feature films. In 1996, Ski joined 92Q FM in Baltimore, Maryland, and in 1998, he was hired by the Atlanta radio station, WVEE, as its morning show host alongside comedian Wanda Smith.

Ski went on to found the Frank Ski Kids Foundation in 2000. The foundation provides assistance to low income youth applicants and youth-serving agencies to expand opportunities for educational, athletic and cultural learning. Later, in 2004, Ski became the spokesperson for the Civil Rights Walk of Fame and raised \$500,000 for the Hosea Williams Feed the Hungry and Homeless and Metro Atlanta Respite & Development Services.

In 2002, Rev. Jesse Louis Jackson, Sr., presented Ski with the Journalist of the Year Award from the Rainbow

Push Coalition, and in 2007, Ski was honored with the Distinguished Community Service Award from the Atlanta Chapter of the National Urban League. He is a member of 100 Black Men of Atlanta, the Latin American Association, Rainbow Push Coalition and Leadership Atlanta.

Ski lives in Atlanta with his wife, Tanya, and their sons.

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# Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Frank Ski was conducted by Denise Gines on February 26, 2008, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Radio personality Frank Ski (1964 - ) worked as a radio disk jockey in Baltimore and Atlanta. Ski hosted the morning show of Atlanta's WVEE-FM radio station. Frank Ski Kids Foundation provided assistance to low income youth applicants and youth-serving agencies to expand opportunities for educational, athletic and cultural learning.

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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:

Ski, Frank, 1964-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Ski, Frank, 1964- --Interviews

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African American radio broadcasters--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews

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Endowments--Officials and employees--Interviews

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African American disc jockeys--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:

Radio Personality

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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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 Frank Ski, February 26, 2008. 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 Frank Ski, Section A2008\_029\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:35 ?

Frank Ski was born Frank Rodriguez on May 9, 1964 in New York City, the child of Sandra Brent and John Rodriguez. His mother's and father's families were from Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico, respectively, but both parents were born and raised in Harlem, New York. Ski has six younger half-siblings. He spent the first six years of his life with his mother and in foster care, after which he went to live with his father in Miami, Florida. Ski continued to spend his summers with his mother and maternal grandparents in New York City, where his grandfather, Donald Small, ran a cleaning business. Ski describes learning family values from his grandfather while helping him at his business. In Miami, Ski lived with his father in a predominantly white area, though his best friend was black. He learned Spanish from his paternal grandmother, who came to Miami for part of the year to take care of him. While attending Ludlam Elementary School in Miami, Ski was interested in science and won a city-wide science fair.

African American radio broadcasters--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews.

Endowments--Officials and employees--Interviews.

African American disc jockeys--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Frank Ski, Section A2008\_029\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:21 ?

Frank Ski describes the racial makeup of Miami, Florida. Ski's father, who was Puerto Rican, married a Cuban woman when Ski was young. Ski talks about the racial divisions among Latinos and in Miami at large. His Puerto Rican heritage gave him job opportunities other black people did not have. Ski describes the sounds, sights, and smells of his childhood, including water and mango trees. In elementary school, Ski enjoyed the outdoors. His father was an avid gardener who taught him to landscape and cut grass, skills that Ski used to earn money as a child. As a boy, Ski often built rockets in a field near his house and played football with the neighborhood children, who were mostly white. He attended Glades Junior High School in Miami where he became a runner. Until high school, Ski had few black friends in Miami, though he had many in New York City, where he spent his summers. He had middling grades at Miami Killian Senior High School, where he joined a black student group and the arts department.

Video Oral History Interview with Frank Ski, Section A2008\_029\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:42 ?

Frank Ski describes how he sustained a knee injury and his memories of the prom at Miami Killian Senior High School in Miami, Florida. He talks about the freedoms that his father allowed him as a child, which once led to attempt to catch an alligator. He reflects on the work ethic that his father instilled in him during his childhood, during which he earned money cutting grass and selling fruit. Denied admission to the University of Miami and the military after high school, Ski worked at McDonald's as well as at Surrey's, a men's clothing. He also formed a DJ crew called IBM and the group performed at parties across Miami. After working at Surrey's for a year and half, Ski moved to Washington, D.C. At the time, his mother was living in New York City and had won the numbers. Ski describes going to New York to help her collect her winnings. Ski describes the early days of rap in New York City and the music scene in Miami in the 1980s, including his association with the hip hop group 2 Live Crew.

Video Oral History Interview with Frank Ski, Section A2008\_029\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:35 ?

Frank Ski talks about the history of Miami bass music and reflects on hip hop culture and entrepreneurship. Ski talks about how music videos changed hip hop culture, noting that videos unified the scene by producing a style of dress that could be seen across the country. He also talks about how the predominant focus of awards shows on male rappers fails to fully reflect hip hop culture. During the 1980s, Ski moved to Baltimore, Maryland and lived with an aunt who held choir practices while he slept on a couch in the same basement room. He continued making music in Baltimore, including his hit song, "Doo Doo Brown." Shortly after Ski was hired as a part-time law clerk in Washington, D.C., he was kicked out of his aunt's house and moved to D.C. He began to work full-time as a clerk and enrolled at the University of the District of Columbia. Ski talks about DJing and started a break dance crew called the IBM Crew in D.C. After winning a break dance competition, Ski was awarded a job at the college radio station.

Video Oral History Interview with Frank Ski, Section A2008\_029\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:17 ?

Frank Ski was hired to host a radio show for the University of the District of Columbia in Washington, D.C. in 1983 after winning a break dancing contest. Ski's show aired on Saturday evenings and was geared towards break dancers. While hosting the show, Ski was hired as a paralegal for Sachs, Greenebaum, & Taylor law firm. He continued to attend the University of D.C. in the evenings and DJ'd parties at night while working for the firm. At the firm, Ski was mentored by lawyer Michael Lubin, who encouraged him to consider going into music full-time and helped him secure a well-paying job as an evening show host for Baltimore's V103. Ski talks about his responsibilities as an evening show host and about his transition to becoming a morning show host. Ski went from living with nothing in an efficiency apartment to renting a townhouse and buying a boat. He talks about his impact on Baltimore club music and the origins of the name "Ski."

Video Oral History Interview with Frank Ski, Section A2008\_029\_001\_006, TRT: 0:28:27 ?

Frank Ski describes meeting his wife, Tanya Parker-Rodriguez, and marrying her in 1995. In 1996, he was fired from V103 Baltimore after the station consolidated and began to remove its high-paid, full-time staff. Ski, who was a top broadcaster in the city, lost his morning show in the process, though his wife continued to work at V103's sister gospel station. Ski's voided contract allowed him to accept a job at a rival station, WERQ (92Q), where he hosted a morning show for two years. Ski reflects on his time as a radio host in Baltimore, Maryland and his efforts to mobilize the city's black community around its exclusion from the city's urban renewal process. He also reflects on his reputation in Baltimore and why he decided to leave the city. In 1998, Ski moved to Atlanta, Georgia, where he had been hired by V103 Atlanta to host a morning show. He describes the hiring process, the show, and his team, including Baltimore legend Miss Tony, and V103 Atlanta entertainment correspondent Miss Sophia.

Video Oral History Interview with Frank Ski, Section A2008\_029\_001\_007, TRT: 0:28:27 ?

Frank Ski describes the structure of his morning radio show at V103 Atlanta. He describes thinking of himself as a salesman, selling commercials and generating money for the radio station's revenue department. He recalls memorable interviews he has conducted, including one with Coretta Scott King shortly before her death and another with Wayne Williams, who was convicted for the Atlanta Child Murders. Ski talks about his involvement with HistoryMaker Xernona Clayton's International Civil Rights Walk of Fame in Atlanta, Georgia, which documents the footprints of under-recognized Civil Rights activists. He

also talks about his foundation, the Frank Ski Kids Foundation, which provides philanthropic support to children and support for youth involvement in sports and science. Ski describes taking eleven teenagers to the Galapagos Islands through an essay contest sponsored by his foundation. Ski also talks about his own children with Tanya Parker-Rodriguez; they have four sons.

Video Oral History Interview with Frank Ski, Section A2008\_029\_001\_008, TRT: 0:15:06 ?

Frank Ski reflects on his hopes and plans for the future. He would like to explore television hosting and teaching. He talks about his employees on both his radio show and the Frank Ski Kids Foundation. Ski reflects on his life, stating that if there is anything he would change, he would finish college and travel the world. He reflects on his legacy and how he would like to be remembered. He concludes the interview by offering advice to future generations.