

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Rey Ramsey

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Ramsey, Rey
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Rey Ramsey,
Dates:	April 29, 2008
Bulk Dates:	2008
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:23:10).
Abstract:	Nonprofit chief executive Rey Ramsey (1960 -) was the co-founder and CEO of the One Economy Corporation, which worked internationally to bring internet resources to low-income communities. He held leadership positions in Enterprise Community Partners and Habitat for Humanity. He also served as Oregon's Director of Housing and Community Services. Ramsey was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 29, 2008, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2008_075
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Lawyer and Chief Executive Officer of One Economy Corporation Rey Ramsey was born Reynard Ramsey on September 10, 1960, in Lower Marion Township, Pennsylvania. At the age of five, Ramsey and his family moved to a predominantly white neighborhood in Atco, New Jersey, where he attended grammar and high school. He went on to enroll at Rutgers University, where he majored in political science and was a member of the Cap and Skull Honor Society. While at Rutgers University, he also became the first African American to head the Rutgers Fraternity/Sorority Council. After graduating with his B.A. degree in political science in 1982, Ramsey went on to receive his J.D. degree from the University of Virginia Law School in 1985.

After graduating from law school, Ramsey moved to Oregon where he worked for the Portland-based law firm of Stoel Rives LLP. In 1986, Ramsey became active in Habitat for Humanity by working on its newsletter, speaking at community events and performing pro bono legal work. Ramsey then decided to make the transition from corporate law to economic law, and worked briefly in various positions managing ports and regional businesses in Oregon. In 1987, Ramsey was appointed by Governor Neil Goldschmidt to serve as the Director of Housing and Community Services in the Oregon State Economic Development Department. In doing this, he became the youngest cabinet member in the history of the State of Oregon.

In 1996, Ramsey went to work for Enterprise Community Partners, a Maryland-based affordable housing nonprofit organization. He served as the organization's vice president before being promoted to president. While there, he was instrumental in the growth of the organization's operating budget and human resources departments. Ramsey was appointed to the board of Habitat for Humanity in 1998, and in 2000, he became the co-founder and CEO of One Economy Corporation. This international nonprofit organization works to bring internet resources to the homes of low-income people.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Rey Ramsey was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 29, 2008, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Nonprofit chief executive Rey Ramsey (1960 -) was the co-founder and CEO of the One Economy Corporation, which worked internationally to bring internet resources to low-income communities. He held leadership positions in Enterprise Community Partners and Habitat for Humanity. He also served as Oregon's Director of Housing and Community Services.

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:

Ramsey, Rey

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Ramsey, Rey--Interviews

African American executives--Interviews

African American government executives--Interviews

Non-governmental organizations--Officials and employees--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

NonProfit Chief 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 Rey Ramsey, April 29, 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).

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 Rey Ramsey, Section A2008_075_001_001, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Rey Ramsey was born on September 10, 1960 in Lower Merion Township, Pennsylvania to Janice Hayes Ramsey and Felix Ramsey. Ramsey's maternal great-grandfather owned property in Florida, and fled to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania after an altercation with a white man. Ramsey's maternal grandfather, James Hayes, went on to serve in the U.S. military, while his maternal grandmother, Marion Hayes, operated a speakeasy in Philadelphia to support the family, and served as a matriarch alongside her two sisters. Under their influence, Ramsey's mother worked from an early age. His paternal grandparents, Queen Esther Anderson Ramsey and Abraham Ramsey, owned a store in Aiken, South Carolina, where his father was born; and later moved to Philadelphia, where Ramsey's grandfather opened another store. The business eventually failed, due in part to his heavy drinking. Ramsey's parents met in Philadelphia, where his mother raised four children while attending the Albert Einstein Medical Center School of Nursing.

African American executives--Interviews.

African American government executives--Interviews.

Non-governmental organizations--Officials and employees--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Rey Ramsey, Section A2008_075_001_002, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Rey Ramsey was born in the predominantly black neighborhood of West Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. At five years old, he moved with his family to Ivystone, a previously all-white community in Atco, New Jersey. They experienced reprisals for integrating the neighborhood, including the destruction of their garden and graffiti referencing the Ku Klux Klan. In response, his parents secured police protection, and installed a pool in their backyard. Ramsey and his siblings were the first African Americans to attend Atco's Assumption School, where he was harassed by his peers and teachers. Ramsey's mother encouraged him to defend himself from physical abuse, and intervened when he faced disciplinary action. Even so, Ramsey struggled academically until the sixth grade, when he was encouraged by his teacher, Elizabeth A. Peiffer. Ramsey became a top student, and went on to attend Paul VI High School in Haddonfield, New Jersey, where he joined the track and hockey teams and became the debate team captain.

Video Oral History Interview with Rey Ramsey, Section A2008_075_001_003, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

Rey Ramsey graduated in 1978 from Paul VI High School in Haddonfield, New Jersey. Despite discouragement from a white guidance counselor, he aspired to become a lawyer, and was influenced by African American attorneys like Thurgood Marshall, who joined the U.S. Supreme Court in 1967. Ramsey matriculated at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey, where he studied political science and African American literature, and worked at the university's WRSU Radio station. He pledged to the Zeta Beta Tau Fraternity, and became the first black president of the fraternity-sorority council. Upon earning a bachelor's degree in 1982, Ramsey enrolled at the University of Virginia Law School in Charlottesville, where he helped organize a teach-in protest against the exclusion of African Americans from the law school faculty. Additionally, Ramsey talks about his early interests in geography, history and art, as well as his admiration of boxer Muhammad Ali and the music of Motown Records.

Video Oral History Interview with Rey Ramsey, Section A2008_075_001_004, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Rey Ramsey enrolled in 1982 at the University of Virginia Law School, where

he helped organize a teach-in protest that featured black scholars like Dr. Alvin Poussaint and Professor Charles Ogletree. He also worked on Reverend Jesse L. Jackson's presidential campaign in 1984. Ramsey was a summer associate at the corporate law firm of Stoel, Rives, Boley, Jones and Grey in Portland, Oregon, where he practiced for two years after graduating. He was appointed by Oregon Governor Neil Goldschmidt to direct the state housing agency from 1989, and used his position to address homelessness and increase affordable housing. In 1996, Ramsey became the president of the Enterprise Foundation, where he launched the online magazine Horizon. He left in 2000 to found his own nonprofit organization, the One Economy Corporation. Ramsey also served as the chairman of Habitat for Humanity International in the early 2000s, and was forced to fire the organization's founder, Millard Fuller, for sexual harassment.

Video Oral History Interview with Rey Ramsey, Section A2008_075_001_005, TRT: 0:24:50 ?

Rey Ramsey was the CEO of the One Economy Corporation, which sought to expand access to digital resources in underprivileged communities. He founded the organization in 2000 with grants from the Ford Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Ramsey talks about his philosophy of social service, and the programs operated by the One Economy Corporation, including the Beehive, a website with guides to public entitlements like the earned income tax credit; and PIC.tv, a digital broadcasting network for public programming. Ramsey describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community, and reflects upon his life, legacy and how he would like to be remembered.