

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Hilary Shelton

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Shelton, Hilary O.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Hilary Shelton,
Dates:	July 28, 2008 and March 5, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2008 and 2012
Physical Description:	10 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (4:35:19).
Abstract:	Civic leader Hilary Shelton (1958 -) was the head of the NAACP Washington Bureau. He helped to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1991 and the Violence Against Women Act. He also served as the United Negro College Fund's federal liaison, and as the federal program policy director for the United Methodist Church's social justice agency, The General Board of Church and Society. Shelton was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 28, 2008 and March 5, 2012, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2008_098
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

NAACP lobbyist and policymaker Hilary Otis Shelton was born on August 12, 1958, in St. Louis, Missouri. Shelton received his B.A. degree in political science from Howard University in Washington, D.C., and went on to attain his M.A. degree in communications from the University of Missouri in St. Louis.

Shelton first worked as the federal program policy director for the United Methodist Church's social justice agency, The General Board of Church and Society. There, he worked on the church's public policy agenda, particularly on issues pertaining to black colleges and universities. He was highly involved in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1991, and also advocated for several other important acts including the Violence Against Women Act. A champion of causes affecting the African American community, Shelton then went on to serve in the position of federal liaison/assistant director to the government affairs department of The College Fund/UNCF, also known as The United Negro College Fund, in Washington, D.C. There, Shelton worked with federal government agencies and departments, as well as colleges and universities to secure the survival, growth, and educational programming excellence of the forty private historically black colleges and universities throughout the United States.

From there, Shelton moved on to the NAACP's Washington bureau, where he handles federal and legislative affairs as well as public policy concerns for the organization's Washington, D.C., office. Shelton serves on a number of national boards of directors including The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, The Center for Democratic Renewal, the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence and the Congressional Black Caucus Institute among many others. Shelton has been honored numerous times for his work. He was the recipient of the National NAACP Medgar W. Evers Award for Excellence, the highest honor bestowed upon a national professional staff member of the NAACP; the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee's Excellence in Advocacy Award; and the

Religious Action Center's Civil Rights Leadership Award in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Shelton lives in Washington, D.C., with his wife, Paula Young Shelton, and their three sons, Caleb Wesley, Aaron Joshua, and Noah Otis Young Shelton.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Hilary Shelton was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 28, 2008 and March 5, 2012, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 10 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. Civic leader Hilary Shelton (1958 -) was the head of the NAACP Washington Bureau. He helped to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1991 and the Violence Against Women Act. He also served as the United Negro College Fund's federal liaison, and as the federal program policy director for the United Methodist Church's social justice agency, The General Board of Church and Society.

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:

Shelton, Hilary O.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Shelton, Hilary O.--Interviews

African American civic leaders--Interviews

Lobbyists--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Occupations:

Civic Leader

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 Hilary Shelton, July 28, 2008 and March 5, 2012.
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 Hilary Shelton, Section A2008_098_001_001, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Hilary Shelton was born on August 12, 1958 in St. Louis, Missouri to Frances McCain Shelton and C.W. Shelton. Shelton's maternal grandfather, Ottis McCain, was the son of an African American woman and a white man. He married Shelton's maternal grandfather, Eupora McCain, who also had white ancestry, and they inherited six hundred acres of land in Gore Springs, Mississippi. Because of their wealth, Shelton's maternal grandparents and uncles faced reprisals from the white residents of Gore Springs, including the Ku Klux Klan and the police. Shelton's mother graduated from high school, and studied at an all-black teacher's college in Grenada, Mississippi. Shelton's paternal grandfather, Ruben Shelton, was the descendent of an enslaved woman and the white slaveholder James Shelton, whose land he inherited in Duck Hill, Mississippi. Shelton's father attended Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College in Lorman, Mississippi; and, after he began courting Shelton's mother, was drafted into the Korean War.

African American civic leaders--Interviews.

Lobbyists--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Hilary Shelton, Section A2008_098_001_002, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Hilary Shelton's parents, Frances McCain Shelton and C.W. Shelton, married after his father returned from the Korean War. They then left Mississippi in search of better employment, and settled in St. Louis, Missouri, where his father drove a taxi, and worked for twenty years at the General Cables Corporation. He also purchased a number of apartment buildings in St. Louis. Shelton's parents raised seven children in the North City, a formerly all-white neighborhood of St. Louis, where Shelton and his siblings often spent time playing, fishing and swimming in Fairground Park. During the summers, Shelton visited his maternal grandparents, Eupora McCain and Ottis McCain, on their farm in Gore Springs, Mississippi. By the 1970s, most of the North City's white residents moved away, and crime became more prevalent in the area. During the third grade, Shelton witnessed a shooting on his way to school. He talks about segregation in St. Louis, which continued during the 1990s.

Video Oral History Interview with Hilary Shelton, Section A2008_098_001_003, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Hilary Shelton attended the all-black Harrison School in St. Louis, Missouri, where the faculty encouraged the students to be politically engaged. Shelton's early interest in civil rights was also influenced by his parents, Frances McCain Shelton and C.W. Shelton, and his community at the Antioch Baptist Church. There, Shelton helped collect canned goods for the Native American community in Wounded Knee, South Dakota; and received his introduction to the NAACP, whose local branch was led by Margaret Bush Wilson and Frankie Freeman. During the fourth grade, Shelton was bused to the all-white Humboldt School, where he and his African American peers were physically and verbally abused by the white students. The busing program was canceled after one year, and Shelton returned to the Harrison School. He went on to attend St. Louis' predominantly black Beaumont High School, where he completed advanced

coursework in social studies, and graduated in 1976.

Video Oral History Interview with Hilary Shelton, Section A2008_098_001_004, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Hilary Shelton attended the predominantly African American Beaumont High School in St. Louis, Missouri. He joined the school band under director Richard Overby, who taught both classical and contemporary music and often hosted musicians like trumpeter Clark Terry and bassist Freddie Washington as guest instructors. At Beaumont High School, Shelton began to aspire to a career in law and politics. He became active with the Black Student Union, and served as the president of the student government during his junior and senior years. In addition, he took part in programs organized by the NAACP Youth Council and the Antioch Baptist Church. During this time, he was influenced by the popular culture of early 1970s, including the music of Parliament Funkadelic, television shows like 'I Spy' and blaxploitation films. Shelton also talks about Clarence Thomas, who grew up alongside his cousin in St. Louis, and whose eventual nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court was opposed by the NAACP.

Video Oral History Interview with Hilary Shelton, Section A2008_098_002_005, TRT: 5:28:31 ?

Hilary Shelton attended Beaumont High School in St. Louis, Missouri from 1972 to 1976. He was a member of the tennis team, a saxophonist in the school band and the president of the student government. Shelton was also actively involved in his school's Black Student Union, and the local chapters of the SCLC and NAACP Youth Council. At the time, the St. Louis NAACP branch was led by Margaret Bush Wilson and Frankie Freeman, whom Shelton met after matriculating to Howard University. There, Shelton majored in political science and communications, interned at WHUR Radio and continued his involvement in civil rights activities. He marched in support of the American Indian Movement's activist Leonard Peltier at the headquarters of the FBI, and took part in Howard University's African Liberation Day, where he heard former Black Panther Kwame Ture speak in support of the Pan-African movement. Shelton also remembers his decision to attend Howard University, which he chose for its history of activism.

Video Oral History Interview with Hilary Shelton, Section A2008_098_002_006, TRT: 6:29:53 ?

Hilary Shelton matriculated in 1976 at Howard University in Washington, D.C., where he was exposed to African American leaders like Kwame Ture, Maya Angelou and Andrew Young, who was the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations at the time. After graduating in 1980, Shelton enrolled in the legal studies program at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts. As part of the program, he interned at Greater Boston Legal Aid, where he lobbied for improved facilities and programs for juvenile offenders through the Juvenile Law Reform Project. Shelton completed the legal studies program in 1982, and then returned to his hometown of St. Louis, Missouri to begin a master's degree in communications at the University of Missouri - St. Louis. He wrote his thesis on the administrations of President James Earl "Jimmy" Carter, Jr. and President Ronald Reagan during the Iran Contra Affair, and was active with the United States Student Association and the Student Government Association.

Video Oral History Interview with Hilary Shelton, Section A2008_098_002_007, TRT: 7:28:46 ?

Hilary Shelton earned a master's degree in communications at the University of Missouri - St. Louis. There, he served on the advisory board of the U.S. National Student Association, through which he lobbied the State of Missouri and the university to divest from corporations with investments in apartheid South Africa. Through these activities, Shelton met President Damu Smith of the Washington Office on Africa; and, following his graduation in 1984, Shelton became the director of the organization. There, Shelton continued his

involvement with the Free South Africa Movement, and contributed to the passage of U.S. Congressman Ronald Dellums' Comprehensive Anti Apartheid Act of 1986. Shelton went on to join the National IMPACT Education Fund and the United Methodist Church's General Board of Church and Society. He remembers the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1991, and his opposition to the appointment of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.

Video Oral History Interview with Hilary Shelton, Section A2008_098_002_008, TRT: 8:30:00 ?

Hilary Shelton served as the president of the graduate student government at the University of Missouri - St. Louis. During his tenure, Shelton often held political discussions with other campus leaders, including a member of the John Birch Society with whom he had strong differences. After graduating, Shelton worked at the Washington Office on Africa and the National IMPACT Education Fund, and then joined the United Methodist Church's General Board of Church and Society. There, he took part in the Million Man March; and was instrumental in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1991, which involved a legislative compromise that led to the appointment of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, who was politically conservative. After ten years, Shelton left to work for the United Negro College Fund under President William H. Gray, III. Wanting to return to work as a government lobbyist, Shelton accepted the directorship of the NAACP Washington Bureau, which was the public policy division of the NAACP.

Video Oral History Interview with Hilary Shelton, Section A2008_098_002_009, TRT: 9:29:56 ?

Hilary Shelton began his directorship of the NAACP Washington Bureau in 1997. In this role, he was responsible for the NAACP's lobbying activities in Washington D.C. In response to the results from the Traffic Stops Statistics Study Act of 1998, which was introduced to the U.S. Senate by John Conyers, Jr., Shelton initially focused on the problem of discriminatory policing, including racial profiling and disparate sentencing laws. Shelton reflects upon the administration of President Barack Obama, who signed numerous bills supported by the NAACP, including the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 and the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009. At the time of the interview, Shelton was working to pass reforms in the areas of criminal justice, education and healthcare. He concludes this part of the interview by describing his hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Hilary Shelton, Section A2008_098_002_010, TRT: 10:09:53 ?

Hilary Shelton met his wife, Paula Young Shelton, while working at the National IMPACT Education Fund in Washington, D.C. After marrying, the couple had three sons. Shelton talks about his family's accomplishments and the influence of his grandfathers, Ottis McCain and Ruben Shelton, upon his life. Shelton also reflects upon his life and legacy, and concludes the interview by describing how he would like to be remembered.