

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Michael W. Lewis

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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>	Lewis, Michael W., 1949-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Michael W. Lewis,
<b>Dates:</b>	May 26, 2010
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2010
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:42:42).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Corporate executive Michael W. Lewis (1949 - ) was the executive vice president of the Harris Trust and Savings Bank and a member of several executive business boards. Lewis was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 26, 2010, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2010_028
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Corporate executive Michael Ward Lewis was born on September 15, 1949 in Metropolitan Detroit. He was one of Martha and Ward Lewis' eight children. Lewis graduated from Ferndale High School before going on to receive his B.B.A. degree from Western Michigan University in 1971. Lewis then attended Indiana University in Bloomington where he earned his M.B.A. degree in 1976.

Immediately after graduate school, Lewis joined Harris Bank as a commercial banking trainee. He then moved up to a commercial banking officer before being named assistant vice president of Harris Bank in 1981. Two years later, Lewis was named vice president of Harris Bank and soon after, the bank was acquired by the BMO Financial Group. In 1986, Lewis was promoted to team leader in the Special Industries Group and took responsibility of the Healthcare, Education, and Tax-Exempt Institutions Team in the bank. Still rising, in 1994, Lewis became senior vice president and market executive. Since 1998 he has served as an executive vice president of Harris and currently is a district executive in the retail banking area.

Lewis is a member of the Harris Bank Diversity Council as well as the Illinois Government Finance Officers Association and the Zoning Board for the village of Olympia Fields. In 2007, Lewis served as Chairman of the Board of Chicago United and in 2009; he became Co-Chair of the BMO U.S. Sustainability Counsel at Harris. For the past three years Lewis has participated in Harris Bank's "Volunteer Day" in partnership with non-profit organizations. Lewis also sits on the Board of Directors for the Western Michigan University Foundation, a position he has held since 2009. He is also a past reader in the Chicago Public Schools "Real Men Read" program and has participated in several "career day" events in local public schools. A member of Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity, he was recognized as a "Business Leader of Color" by Chicago United and 'Who's Who in Black Chicago.

Michael Lewis was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 26, 2010.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Michael W. Lewis was conducted by Thomas Jefferson on May 26, 2010, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Corporate executive Michael W. Lewis (1949 - ) was the executive vice president of the Harris Trust and Savings Bank and a member of several executive business boards.

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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:

Lewis, Michael W., 1949-

Jefferson, Thomas (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Lewis, Michael W., 1949- --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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Harris Bank

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## Occupations:

Corporate Executive

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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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 Michael W. Lewis, May 26, 2010. 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 Michael W. Lewis, Section A2010\_028\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:14 ?

Michael W. Lewis was born on September 15, 1949 in Ferndale, Michigan to Martha Williams Lewis and Ward Lewis, Jr. His paternal grandfather, Ward Lewis, Sr., owned a farm in Newbern, Alabama, where Lewis' father was raised. Lewis' mother was born in Sawyerville, Alabama to Beatrice McGinister

Williams and Robert Williams; and moved to Birmingham, Alabama to attend A.H. Parker High School, where she met Lewis' father. Shortly after the birth of their first child, Lolita Lewis Ransom, Lewis' parents left the South and relocated to Ferndale, Michigan. There, Lewis' mother raised eight children, including Lewis, while his father worked for the DeSoto division of the Chrysler Corporation. When the company ceased the DeSoto model's production, he became a junk man and mechanic, and later a school custodian. Lewis began his education at Ferndale's Grant Elementary School, where he played the clarinet in the orchestra and marching band; and then went on to attend Ferndale High School.

Video Oral History Interview with Michael W. Lewis, Section A2010\_028\_001\_002, TRT: 0:33:55  
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Michael W. Lewis was raised in a shotgun house in Ferndale, Michigan, where his father was an autoworker. He attended Ferndale's Grant Elementary School and Ferndale High School, where he enjoyed studying languages and playing sports. With the encouragement of his football coach, Frank Joranko, Lewis decided to apply to college, and was offered a football scholarship to Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. There, he played football for his first four years of study, and then focused on his coursework during his fifth year. Upon graduating with a business degree in 1971, Lewis struggled to find work, as the automotive industry was in a recession at the time, and Lewis' low draft number dissuaded other employers. He decided to enter the banking industry, where many companies offered employee training programs. Lewis began his career at the Detroit Bank and Trust Company in Detroit, Michigan. He also recalls the civil unrest in Detroit in 1967.

Video Oral History Interview with Michael W. Lewis, Section A2010\_028\_001\_003, TRT: 0:27:53  
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Michael W. Lewis was hired as a teller at the Detroit Bank and Trust Company in 1971. He participated in the bank's informal management training program, and then joined the operations division, where he decided to pursue a career in corporate banking. After two years at the Detroit Bank and Trust Company, Lewis earned a fellowship from the Consortium for Graduate Study in Management, and enrolled at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. Upon graduating with an M.B.A. degree in 1976, Lewis aspired to work for the Continental Illinois National Bank and Trust Company; but decided to accept a relationship management position at the Harris Trust and Savings Bank, where his supervisors were more interested in his personal development. After moving to Chicago, Illinois, he secured a series of promotions, and became the bank's executive vice president in 1988. Lewis also recalls meeting his wife, Jacqueline James Lewis, at Western Michigan University, where she earned a master's degree in social work.

Video Oral History Interview with Michael W. Lewis, Section A2010\_028\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:28  
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Michael W. Lewis was promoted in 1986 to the role of division administrator at the Harris Trust and Savings Bank. Under the mentorship of Ben Nelson, Lewis' corporate lending portfolio focused on tax-exempt institutions, including local government entities and non-profit organizations like the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago. In 1994, Lewis became a senior vice president and market executive; and, from 1998, he was responsible for the LaSalle Street Project, an extension of Reverend Jesse L. Jackson's Wall Street Project in New York City, which led to the implementation of a minority supplier directive at the Harris Trust and Savings

Bank. In 2003, Lewis was promoted to the regional presidency of the bank's retail operations in the Chicagoland area. Lewis also talks about his service on the BMO Harris Diversity Council under bank president Alan G. McNally, and his executive sponsorship of the Asian American Coalition of Employees from 2004 to 2008.

Video Oral History Interview with Michael W. Lewis, Section A2010\_028\_001\_005, TRT: 0:33:37  
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Michael W. Lewis served from 2003 as a regional president in the retail division of BMO Harris Bank. In this role, he witnessed the financial recession of 2008, during which the bank was denied government support because its parent organization, the Bank of Montreal, was headquartered in Canada. Throughout his career, Lewis supported people of color in the banking industry through his service on the BMO Harris Diversity Council and the board of Chicago United. In addition, he belonged to the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, the Haworth School of Business' Business Advisory Council and the Western Michigan University Foundation Board. Lewis was also a member of Real Men Read and the coach of a youth soccer team. He describes his hopes for the African American community, and shares his advice to aspiring banking executives. He also reflects upon his life, legacy, family and how he would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Michael W. Lewis, Section A2010\_028\_001\_006, TRT: 0:08:35  
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Michael W. Lewis narrates his photographs.