

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Clarence Page

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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>	Page, Clarence, 1947-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Page,
<b>Dates:</b>	June 28, 2010, March 7, 2012 and May 22, 2014
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2010, 2012 and 2014
<b>Physical Description:</b>	15 uncompressed MOV digital video files (7:02:18).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Newspaper columnist Clarence Page (1947 - ) was one of the most prominent nationally syndicated journalists in the country. Page was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 28, 2010, March 7, 2012 and May 22, 2014, in Takoma Park, Maryland and Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2010_064
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Pulitzer Prize-winning news columnist Clarence Page was born in Dayton, Ohio on June 2, 1947, to Clarence Hannibal Page, a factory worker, and Maggie Page, the owner of a catering service. During his senior year of high school, Page served as feature editor at the school's biweekly newspaper. In 1965, he won his first award from the Southeast Ohio High School Newspaper Association for the year's best feature article. It was at this point that Page, under the guidance of Mrs. Mary Kendall, his high school newspaper instructor, became very interested in journalism. He graduated from Middletown High School in 1965, and that summer, he earned his first pay as a journalist by selling freelance photos and stories to the *Middletown Journal* and *Cincinnati Enquirer*. In 1969, he received his B.S. degree in journalism from Ohio University, where he worked on the student newspaper while at college.

That same year, Page joined the *Chicago Tribune* as one of its few African American reporters. Six months later, he was drafted into the military, where he served in the press office at the 212th Artillery Group, Fort Lewis, Washington. In 1971, Page returned to the *Chicago Tribune*, where he covered a variety of topics, including police, religion, and neighborhood news, with freelance assignments as a rock music critic for the Tempo section at night. In 1976, he became a foreign correspondent in Africa, and in 1980, after eleven years at the *Chicago Tribune*, he joined WBBM-TV, a CBS-owned station, in August 1980, and while working there, was assigned the Harold Washington mayoral campaign. In 1984, Page returned to the *Chicago Tribune* as a columnist and a member of the editorial board. Three years later, his column became syndicated nationally, and in May 1987, he married Lisa Johnson. Their first and only son, Grady Jonathan, was born on June 3, 1989, and in 1991, they moved to Washington, DC.

The recipient of honorary doctorates from Columbia College in Chicago, Chicago Theological Seminary, and Ohio University, Page is a regular contributor of essays to "NewsHour with Jim Lehrer" and an occasional commentator on National Public Radio's "Weekend Edition Sunday." In 1972, he participated in a *Chicago Tribune* Task Force

series on voter fraud that won him a Pulitzer Prize. Four years later, he won the Edward Scott Beck Award for overseas reporting on the changing politics of Southern Africa. An investigative series written by Page, "The Black Tax," was awarded the 1980 Illinois UPI award for Community Service. In 1989, Page's column won the Pulitzer Prize for Commentary, and in 1992, he was inducted into the Chicago Journalism Hall of Fame. In 1996, Page published his first book, *Showing My Color: Impolite Essays on Race and Identity*.

Clarence Page was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on June 28, 2010 and March 6, 2012.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Clarence Page was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 28, 2010, March 7, 2012 and May 22, 2014, in Takoma Park, Maryland and Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 15 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Newspaper columnist Clarence Page (1947 - ) was one of the most prominent nationally syndicated journalists in the country.

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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:

Page, Clarence, 1947-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Page, Clarence, 1947- --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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Chicago tribune

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## Occupations:

Newspaper Columnist

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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 Clarence Page, June 28, 2010, March 7, 2012 and May 22, 2014. 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 Clarence Page, Section A2010\_064\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:58 ?

Clarence Page describes his biological and adoptive family's history. Page was adopted at birth and raised by Maggie Lee Williams Page and Clarence Hanable Page, near Dayton, Ohio. His adoptive mother was born in Carrollton, Alabama in 1911, migrated to Detroit, Michigan, and then to Middletown, Ohio, where she worked as a housekeeper and a nanny. His adoptive father was born in March of 1911 in Elba, Alabama, and also migrated to Ohio to work in the factories there. Page discusses how his parents met and married, his mother's relationship with her employers, and her restaurant and catering businesses. He also reflects upon not knowing his biological father, and finding out about his adoption when he was in his late twenties.

Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Page, Section A2010\_064\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:29 ?

Clarence Page's father, Clarence Hanable Page, was born in Elba, Alabama in 1911, and grew up there until his family moved to Middletown, Ohio, when he was in high school. Page discusses why his parents adopted him, his father's influence on his life, and his mother's love for him. He grew up in Middletown, where he attended Garfield Elementary School. Page describes the sights, sounds and smells of growing up, and race relations in Middletown. He also talks about his grand-uncle, Monroe Page, who was well known as a leader in the black community in Dothan, Alabama.

Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Page, Section A2010\_064\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:47 ?

Clarence Page was raised in Middletown, Ohio, where he attended Garfield Elementary School, McKinley Junior High School, and Middletown High School. He talks about being aware of segregation while growing up, how it taught him to look at the world with empathy, and the desegregation of the North in the 1960s. Page also discusses his positive attitude towards school, and becoming interested in journalism while he was in high school. He grew up with a television set at his home, and recalls the first black reporters on national news networks, and watching political conventions on TV in the 1960s. Page also talks about prominent individuals who were from Middletown, frequenting the public library, and changes in media trends since the 1960s.

Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Page, Section A2010\_064\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:48 ?

Clarence Page became interested in journalism while studying at Middletown High School in his hometown of Middletown, Ohio. He describes the inspiration that he drew from Louis Lomax, who became the first African American television journalist, and his own first journalistic experience with a camera that his mother bought him on his seventeenth birthday. As a young boy, Page watched the media coverage of political conventions and debates, as well as of the Civil Rights Movement. He reflects upon how television changed media in America by the late 1950s, as well as news reporters in the 1960s and 1970s. He talks about black newspapers and magazines such as the 'Pittsburgh Courier', 'Ebony' and 'Jet'. He also discusses black media and publisher John H. Johnson. After graduating from high school, Page attended Ohio University to study journalism. He also talks about his stutter as a child, and the work of his minister to try to help him overcome it.

Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Page, Section A2010\_064\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:52 ?

From 1965 to 1969, Clarence Page attended Ohio University, in Athens, Ohio, where he studied journalism. He joined the school newspaper, where he received the opportunity to hone his journalistic skills. Page talks about the bands and entertainers who came to Ohio University, and his interview with Bill Cosby. He

talks about the number of journalists trained at Ohio University, the demographics of the college, the political scene on campus in the 1960s and black students there, as well as the political changes that took place during the Black Power Movement. Page also talks about overcoming his stutter in high school, and his social life in college.

Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Page, Section A2010\_064\_001\_006, TRT: 0:31:46 ?

From 1965 to 1969, Clarence Page attended Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, where he studied journalism. He recalls his experience there in the aftermath of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, being asked to teach a black literature course as an undergraduate student, and the inspiration that he gained from reading Malcolm X's autobiography on a bus journey between college and his hometown. Page talks about being drafted into the Vietnam War, and his own views on the war. Upon graduating from college in 1969, Page received several offers from leading newspapers across the country, and decided to join the 'Chicago Tribune'. Page discusses the mainstream and black newspapers in Chicago in the 1960s and 1970s, his early days at the 'Chicago Tribune', his colleague and mentor, HistoryMaker Vernon Jarett, and HistoryMaker Joseph Boyce, who was the first black reporter in the newsroom at the 'Chicago Tribune'.

Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Page, Section A2010\_064\_002\_007, TRT: 9:30:25 ?

In 1969, upon graduating with his journalism degree from Ohio University, Clarence Page accepted a position as a reporter for the 'Chicago Tribune'. Six months later, he was drafted into the U.S. Army, and describes his two-year experience there. Page discusses his reporting assignments at the Chicago Tribune, the intricacies of Chicago politics in the late 1960s and the 1970s, being a journalist in Chicago during that era, and Chicago's influence on his journalism. He talks about reporting on the Black Panther Party in Chicago, the murder of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, the student killings at Kent State University and Jackson State University, and working undercover as an election worker in the primary of 1972. Page also discusses Chicago journalists and HistoryMakers Lu Palmer and Vernon Jarett.

Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Page, Section A2010\_064\_002\_008, TRT: 10:29:13 ?

In this section of the interview, Clarence Page describes his experience reporting for the 'Chicago Tribune' in the late 1960s and the 1970s. He talks about his wide experience in reporting on Chicago politics, and his time in South Africa and Rhodesia as a foreign correspondent in 1976 during the apartheid regime. Page describes his experience in South Africa, the city of Soweto, the Soweto uprising, and black journalists and black publications in South Africa.

Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Page, Section A2010\_064\_002\_009, TRT: 11:31:26 ?

In 1976, Clarence Page served as a foreign correspondent in South Africa for the 'Chicago Tribune', where he covered the Soweto riots. He also talks about prominent South African political figures. Upon his return to Chicago, Page became an assistant city editor, and enjoyed his work as a columnist. He talks about the poor representation of African Americans and other minorities on television shows prior to the 1980s, the change in this trend in the 1980s, and meeting Oprah Winfrey when she first arrived in Chicago in the 1980s. Page also talks about his first wife, Leanita McClain, her success as a young journalist, and her tragic death by suicide in 1984. He also comments upon the suicide rate amongst African Americans.

Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Page, Section A2010\_064\_002\_010, TRT: 12:25:53 ?

In 1980, Clarence Page won the Illinois United Press International (UPI) award

for Community Service for his 'Chicago Tribune' investigative series entitled, 'The Black Tax'. He talks about his findings, and the progress made by the African American community in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1980, Page began to work at WBBM-TV in Chicago. He discusses his coverage of 'Chicago Fest', and Harold Washington's mayoral campaign and win in 1984. Page returned to the Chicago Tribune the same year, where he joined the editorial board.

Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Page, Section A2010\_064\_002\_011, TRT: 13:33:35 ?

In this section of the interview, Clarence Page talks about his relationship with Bernard Epstein, the Republican mayoral candidate against Harold Washington in 1983 in Chicago, and his interview with Minister Louis Farrakhan. He also discusses Reverend Jesse Jackson's presidential run in 1984, editing his first wife, Leanita McClain's articles for a Northwestern University publication entitled 'A Foot in Each World', the black middle class and the social divide, as well as the differences in his own and Leanita McClain's childhood surroundings.

Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Page, Section A2010\_064\_003\_012, TRT: 12:28:36 ?

Clarence Page started as a local columnist at the Chicago Tribune in Chicago, Illinois; and his column, 'Page's Page,' entered national syndication in 1987. Also that year, Page married Lisa Johnson, whom met at a Chicago Magazine event in 1984. In 1988, Page reported on several issues, including the discrimination faced by AIDS patients at dental practices; and the relationship between the administration of Mayor Eugene Sawyer and Chicago's African American community. As a result of this reporting, Page became the first African American to earn the Pulitzer Prize for Commentary, in 1989. Page then moved with his wife and their young son, Grady Page, to Washington, D.C., where Page joined the Chicago Tribune's Washington bureau. At this point in the interview, Page describes his writing style, which he identifies as conversational and informed; and his favorite columnists, including Mike Royko and William Raspberry.

Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Page, Section A2010\_064\_003\_013, TRT: 13:30:51 ?

Clarence Page joined the Chicago Tribune's bureau in Washington, D.C. in the early 1990s. In 1992, he was inducted into the Chicago Journalism Hall of Fame. As a nationally syndicated columnist, Page reported on a variety social issues, including the effects of institutionalized racism, and intra-class differences in the African American community. Page also covered political topics, such as David Duke's unsuccessful run for governor of Louisiana. Page went on to serve as a recurrent commentator on public affairs television programs like 'The McLaughlin Group,' 'Hardball with Chris Matthews' and 'PBS NewsHour.' At this point in the interview, he talks about the relationship between the African American community and bi-partisan politics. He also describes his own moderate political affiliation, which informed his career and writing style. In 1996, Page's essay collection, 'Showing My Color: Impolite Essays on Race and Identity,' was published by HarperCollins.

Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Page, Section A2010\_064\_003\_014, TRT: 14:27:12 ?

Clarence Page participated in the Million Man March in Washington, D.C. in 1995. At this time, Page was a nationally syndicated columnist in the Washington bureau of the Chicago Tribune. In addition, Page served as a featured commentator on the public affairs program 'The McLaughlin Group'; and he appeared in films like 'Rising Sun' and 'Murder at 1600.' Over the course of his journalistic career, Page covered the activities of well-known African Americans, including reverends Al Sharpton and Jesse L. Jackson. At this point in the interview, Page talks about the presidencies of Bill Clinton and

Barack Obama; and he recalls the National Rifle Association's campaign against presidential hopeful Al Gore. Page reflects upon the changes in the news media industry and the state of black media, including promising journalists like Wesley Lowery. As a child, Page overcame his stutter by engaging in rather than shying away from conversation.

Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Page, Section A2010\_064\_003\_015, TRT: 15:05:27 ?

Clarence Page became the first African American to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Commentary, in 1989. While his parents, Maggie Williams Page and Clarence H. Page, were initially disappointed in Page's career choice, their support grew after they witnessed Page's first television appearance. Page and his wife, Lisa Johnson, had one son together, Grady Page, who at the time of the interview intended to study psychology at the University of Maryland. Page concludes the interview by reflecting upon his legacy and how he would like to be remembered.