

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Joe Davidson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Davidson, Joe, 1949-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Joe Davidson,
Dates:	January 18, 2013 and March 1, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	9 uncompressed MOV digital video files (4:17:55).
Abstract:	Newspaper columnist Joe Davidson (1949 -) founding board member of the National Association of Black Journalists, has served as a reporter for the Washington Post and the Wall Street Journal. Davidson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 18, 2013 and March 1, 2013, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_037
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Newspaper columnist Joe Davidson was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1949. He graduated from Mumford High School in 1967. In 1971, Davidson received his B.A. degree in education and political science from Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. He received his M.P.P. degree in public policy from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor in 1974.

Davidson's professional career began in 1971 at the *Detroit News*. He moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1974, and joined the *Philadelphia Bulletin*, where he became City Hall bureau chief. Davidson later served as City Hall reporter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and managing editor for the *National Leader*. In 1984, Davidson moved to Washington, D.C., to work for *The Wall Street Journal*. During his tenure at *The Wall Street Journal*, Davidson covered a broad range of domestic issues and agencies, including the U.S. Justice Department as well as national politics. He was also based in Johannesburg, South Africa, where he served as a news correspondent during the aftermath of Nelson Mandela's release from prison and subsequent election as the president of South Africa. After serving as a consulting editor for the Rev. Jesse Jackson's Rainbow/Push organization and as an editor at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Davidson joined *The Washington Post* in 2005. Davidson has also appeared as a commentator or contributor to PBS's "Religion & Ethics Weekly," National Public Radio, BET, MSNBC, and *Emerge Magazine*.

Davidson is a founding board member of the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) and is past-president of the Philadelphia Association of Black Journalists (PABJ). He is also the recipient of numerous journalism awards, including the Founder's Medal from the NABJ, the Alfred G. Wilson Outstanding Male Graduate Award from Oakland University, a First Place NABJ Award for International Reporting, and a First Place Award for reporting from Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri.

Davidson lives in Washington, D.C. with his wife, Bernardine Watson. They have three sons: Hakim and Jasiri

Davidson and Robert Watson, as well as a granddaughter, Naomi Grace Sebelko-Watson.

Joe Davidson was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 18, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Joe Davidson was conducted by Larry Crowe on January 18, 2013 and March 1, 2013, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 9 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Newspaper columnist Joe Davidson (1949 -) founding board member of the National Association of Black Journalists, has served as a reporter for the Washington Post and the Wall Street Journal.

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:

Davidson, Joe, 1949-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Davidson, Joe, 1949- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Washington Post Company

Occupations:

Newspaper Columnist

HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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 Joe Davidson, January 18, 2013 and March 1, 2013. 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 Joe Davidson, Section A2013_037_001_001, TRT: 1:29:11 ?

Joe Davidson was born on April 26, 1949 in Detroit, Michigan as the only child of Margaret Drew and Joe Davidson, Sr. His mother was born in Chicago, Illinois and raised in Grand Haven and Detroit, Michigan where she attended Northern High School. Davidson's father, was born and raised in Louisiana. He attended Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas, was rejected from World War II service because of his flat feet, and became a bus driver after moving to Detroit in search of better opportunities. Davidson's grandfather, Judge Davidson worked as an elevator operator in Hot Springs, Arkansas, a resort town. Davidson's parents enjoyed dressing up and participating in Detroit's nightlife. Davidson describes his parents' personalities, his earliest childhood memory, and his childhood neighborhood in Detroit.

Video Oral History Interview with Joe Davidson, Section A2013_037_001_002, TRT: 2:29:33 ?

Joe Davidson was raised near the University of Detroit in Detroit, Michigan. Although his parents were separated for a time, they reunited when Davidson was eight years old. His father was a bus driver and his mother was a bookkeeper. Davidson describes his childhood neighborhood as full of playmates and nuclear black families from different backgrounds. As a child, Davidson enjoyed camping, sports, and working in the safety patrol. He attended Patton Gill Elementary, Hally School, Post Junior High School, and Mumford High School. Davidson developed an early interest in the news on television, radio, and the newspaper. He also talks about the effect of the Civil Rights Movement and labor movements in Detroit, Michigan. Davidson recalls the beginning of Motown music in the late 1950s and its influence on his childhood. He describes his experience at Mumford High School where he was involved in the Student Council, Black History Club, and Current Affairs Club. Davidson talks about influential teachers.

Video Oral History Interview with Joe Davidson, Section A2013_037_001_003, TRT: 3:28:29 ?

Joe Davidson attended Mumford High School in Detroit, Michigan from 1963 to 1967 during the Civil Rights Movement. He heard members of the Black Power Movement like Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown. Davidson and his father both participated in Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 march along Woodward Avenue in Detroit. In high school, Davidson worked as a copy aide at the Detroit News. He decided to attend Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan after the school admitted him into its Charter College program. While there, Davidson took political science courses because of his desire to become a journalist. While Davidson was a student, the black professors included Carl Gregory, Dewitt Dikes, and Manny Pearson. Davidson was active in black student organizations on campus and also ran an integrated tutoring club with black and white students who tutored black elementary students. He talks about the use of different terms to describe African Americans from Negro to black.

Video Oral History Interview with Joe Davidson, Section A2013_037_001_004, TRT: 4:28:32 ?

Joe Davidson talks about race relations on the campus of Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan, the 1967 Detroit race riot, and his memories of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination in 1968. In 1971, he was recognized as the outstanding male graduate when he graduated from Oakland University. After graduation, he worked full-time at the Detroit News for several months before receiving a fellowship to the Washington Journalism Center in Washington, D.C. Davidson filed papers as a conscientious objector to the Vietnam War under the Nixon administration. While at the Washington Journalism Center, Davidson met black journalists including J. Whyatt Mondesire and Julius Ducha of the Washington Post. After the fellowship, Davidson returned to the Detroit News before beginning his graduate studies in

public policy at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in 1972. In graduate school, Davidson did freelance work for the Detroit News. Davidson also talks about his radio work with Project Bait.

Video Oral History Interview with Joe Davidson, Section A2013_037_001_005, TRT: 5:28:35 ?

Joe Davidson received his M.A. degree in public policy from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in 1974, and then he moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He worked at the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, first in the neighborhood beat and then as City Hall Bureau Chief while Frank Rizzo was Mayor. He also taught at Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In 1975, Davidson was a founding member of the National Association of Black Journalists with other Philadelphia HistoryMakers Chuck Stone and Acel Moore. Davidson worked at the Philadelphia Bulletin until it ceased operation in 1982. He then briefly worked at the Philadelphia Inquirer before becoming managing editor of the National Leader. Davidson describes Philadelphia politicians, including Mayors Frank Rizzo, Bill Green, and HistoryMaker W. Wilson Goode, and his coverage of Mayor Goode's bombing of MOVE in 1985. He also describes the arrest and trial of Philadelphia journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Video Oral History Interview with Joe Davidson, Section A2013_037_002_006, TRT: 6:28:48 ?

Joe Davidson became managing editor of the National Leader in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1982 and remained with the paper until it ceased operation in 1984, covering the elections of HistoryMaker and Philadelphia Mayor W. Wilson Goode as well as of Chicago Mayor Harold Washington. In 1984, Davidson moved to Washington, D.C. to write for the Wall Street Journal, where he covered education, health, South Africa, and the Justice Department. In 1991, Davidson lived in South Africa as a foreign correspondent after the release of Nelson Mandela, and he returned to South Africa in 1994 to cover Mandela's election as president. Davidson reflects on his experience in South Africa and compares it to the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. In 1988, Davidson covered the presidential campaign of HistoryMaker Reverend Jesse Jackson. Davidson left the Wall Street Journal in 1997, after which he continued to teach journalism at Howard University in Washington, D.C. as well as train and consult.

Video Oral History Interview with Joe Davidson, Section A2013_037_002_007, TRT: 7:29:39 ?

Joe Davidson reflects on the political leanings of the Wall Street Journal, which he left in 1997. After leaving, he edited a magazine for the Joint Center for Political Economic Studies, consulted for National Public Radio, and edited the magazine and newsletter for Rainbow/PUSH. In 2002, Davidson wrote an article on his former co-worker Daniel Pearl for the Washington Post after his kidnapping. He also reflects on the dangers he encountered as a foreign correspondent in South Africa during 1986. In 2005, Davidson was hired by the Washington Post, and, in 2008, he became a columnist. Davidson reflects on covering the 2008 presidential campaign of HistoryMaker and President Barack Obama and the reluctance of black voters to support Obama before he won the Iowa Caucus.

Video Oral History Interview with Joe Davidson, Section A2013_037_002_008, TRT: 8:29:27 ?

Joe Davidson began working for the Washington Post in 2008 as a columnist covering federal employee issues. Davidson reflects on the concerns of federal employees under the administrations of President George W. Bush and HistoryMaker President Barack Obama and the freeze on basic pay rates that the Obama administration has instituted, the 2013 federal budget sequester, and the decline of the U.S. Postal Service. Davidson talks about his Washington Post

column, his articles opposing the Defense of Marriage Act, his continued involvement with the National Association of Black Journalists, and his volunteer service with the Trotter Group. He also reflects upon his legacy as well as his regrets.

Video Oral History Interview with Joe Davidson, Section A2013_037_002_009, TRT: 9:25:41 ?

Joe Davidson's concerns for the black community include the high levels of violence among young black men and conformity to white standards of beauty among black women. Davidson shares his journalistic philosophy and comments on the importance of ethics. He talks about how the mainstream media historically excluded coverage of the black community other than negative, crime stories which has led to many blacks' distrust. Davidson talks about his family and shares his pride in being involved with the National Association of Black Journalists. Davidson would like to be remembered for his family, his journalism, and his attempts to improve the lot of black people. Davidson concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.