

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

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## Overview of the Collection

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| <b>Repository:</b>           | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616<br>info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com   |
| <b>Creator:</b>              | Waldron, Clarence, 1957-  |
| <b>Title:</b>                | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Waldron,  |
| <b>Dates:</b>                | January 25, 2014  |
| <b>Bulk Dates:</b>           | 2014  |
| <b>Physical Description:</b> | 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:31:42).   |
| <b>Abstract:</b>             | Journalist Clarence Waldron (1957 - ) was a senior editor and writer at Jet magazine for twenty-nine years. Waldron was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 25, 2014, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| <b>Identification:</b>       | A2014_022   |
| <b>Language:</b>             | The interview and records are in English.   |

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Journalist Clarence Waldron was born in 1957 in Union Township, New Jersey. In 1973, Waldron received a full scholarship from A Better Chance to attend a college preparatory boarding school, Darrow School in New Lebanon, New York. In 1979, he graduated from the Columbia College of Columbia University with his B.A. degree in English Literature. Waldron went on to receive his M.S. degree in journalism from Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism in 1980. While attending Columbia's graduate school, he received a RCA/NBC Fellowship that covered full tuition and fees.

Upon graduation, Waldron was hired as a general assignment reporter for *The Press*, a daily newspaper in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Then, from 1982 until 2011, he worked for the Johnson Publishing Company, where he served as senior editor and writer for *JET* magazine. At *JET* Waldron specialized in arts and entertainment, education and human rights. He conducted interviews and wrote stories on a long list of celebrities and leaders including President Barack Obama, Aretha Franklin, Maya Angelou, Tony Bennett, Minister Louis Farrakhan, Cornel West, Aaliyah, Queen Latifah, Mary J. Blige, Patti LaBelle, Al Sharpton, Nancy Wilson, Bill Cosby, Whitney Houston, Jamie Foxx, Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr., Jennifer Hudson, Steve Harvey, Tom Joyner, Herb Kent and Dionne Warwick, among others. The legendary entertainer Eartha Kitt gave Waldron her last print interview that ran in *Ebony* shortly before she died in 2008. Waldron also served as contributing editor to *Ebony*, *Ebony Man*, and *JET* magazine.

In 1998, Waldron was hired as an adjunct lecturer at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. He also became an adjunct lecturer at Columbia College Chicago in 2007. In 2012, Waldron founded CW Media, a multi-faceted arts and entertainment company specializing in book projects, consulting, public relations and motivational speaking, where he serves as CEO, writer and editor. Waldron also co-authored and edited "Geoffrey Holder & Carmen DeLavallade: A Memoir in Four Movements - the Exhibition Catalogue," and was the editor for Merri Dee's book *Life Lessons On Faith, Forgiveness & Grace*.

Waldron has received multiple awards, including a PASS Award from the National Council on Crime Delinquency, a Legacy Award from Elektra/Atlantic Records, the Award of Excellence from Visions Blue Institute in Chicago, and the Golden Quill Award for Feature Writing. In 2010, he received the Legacy Award from the National Association of Black Journalists, and was cited as ‘the dean of arts and entertainment journalists’.

Clarence Waldron was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 25, 2014.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Clarence Waldron was conducted by Larry Crowe on January 25, 2014, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Journalist Clarence Waldron (1957 - ) was a senior editor and writer at Jet magazine for twenty-nine years.

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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:

Waldron, Clarence, 1957-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Waldron, Clarence, 1957---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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## Occupations:

Journalist

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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 Waldron, January 25, 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 Waldron, Section A2014\_022\_001\_001, TRT: 1:30:21  
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Clarence Waldron was born on November 24, 1957 in Union Township, New Jersey to Constance Waldron and Clarence Harris. His birth mother was born in Newark, where she met his birth father, who came from Oxford, North Carolina. They were both alcoholics, and Waldron was adopted by his foster parents, domestic Bertha Hill Culver and laborer Alexander Culver, at the age of five months old. His foster mother was born in Springfield, Ohio, and moved to Newark after her father, Samuel Hill, was lynched. She married Waldron's foster father, who worked for Barrett and Company and Good Deal Supermarket, Inc., and they raised five biological children together. They later adopted Waldron and raised him in East Orange, New Jersey, where they were the third African American family on their block. Waldron was close with his foster sister, Catherine Culver, who founded the Catherine Culver Tropical Paradise Dancers. She inspired him to pursue his passions; and, years later, Waldron introduced her to dancer Katherine Dunham.

Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Waldron, Section A2014\_022\_001\_002, TRT: 2:29:13 ?

Clarence Waldron was raised by his foster parents, Bertha Hill Culver and Alexander Culver, in East Orange, New Jersey. From an early age, Waldron was interested in the entertainment industry. He idolized singer Dionne Warwick, and was mentored by his foster sister, dancer Catherine Culver. At this point, Waldron describes his other foster siblings and their influence upon his life. He began his education at the Nassau School in East Orange. He was encouraged by his foster father, with whom he watched 'Jeopardy!' each evening. When Waldron was sixteen years old, his foster father passed away, and he joined a local Pentecostal church. Waldron went on to attend Columbia University in New York City. While there, he interviewed poet Amiri Baraka about his activism in the late 1970s for WNET-TV. One year later, he interviewed Dionne Warwick for The Black Collegian magazine. Waldron describes his interviewing technique, and how it was influenced by these early experiences.

Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Waldron, Section A2014\_022\_001\_003, TRT: 3:28:25 ?

Clarence Waldron began his education at the integrated Nassau School in East Orange, New Jersey. He was academically gifted, and often misbehaved due to boredom. Waldron was inspired to succeed during the fifth grade, when he had his first African American teacher, Betty Neals. He enrolled at the majority-black Vernon L. Davey Junior High School during the seventh grade, and attended East Orange High School from the ninth grade. At fourteen years old, Waldron met his birth mother, Constance Waldron, for the first time. Two years later, he obtained a position in the juvenile division of the East Orange Police Department. Based on his experiences there, Waldron wrote an article on juvenile delinquency, and was interviewed by the East Orange Record. The story was then picked up by The New York Times. With help from his social worker, Waldron received an A Better Chance scholarship to attend the majority-white Darrow School in New Lebanon, New York.

Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Waldron, Section A2014\_022\_001\_004, TRT: 4:28:34 ?

Clarence Waldron received a scholarship in 1973 to attend the Darrow School, which was a predominantly white and wealthy boarding school in New Lebanon, New York. Waldron aspired to become an actor, and joined the school's theater program, where he was denied a leading role because of his race. After graduating in 1975, Waldron enrolled at Columbia University in New York City, where he majored in English literature. During his freshman year, he worked at

Columbia Records under black publicist Irene Gandy. The following year, Waldron secured an internship at 'The MacNeil/Lehrer Report' on WNET-TV, where he was mentored by journalist Charlayne Hunter-Gault and interviewed film director Ossie Davis. During his junior year, he wrote for Money magazine. In his final year of college, Waldron wrote for The Black Collegian magazine, where he covered Eartha Kitt's performance in 'Timbuktu!' and interviewed Dionne Warwick about the importance of education.

Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Waldron, Section A2014\_022\_001\_005, TRT: 5:28:31  
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Clarence Waldron graduated in 1979 with a bachelor's degree from Columbia University. He aspired to become a cultural affairs journalist, and received an RCA-NBC Fellowship to continue his training at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. There, he was inspired by his African American professor, Phyllis Garland, who was a former editor of Ebony magazine and had interviewed celebrities like Josephine Baker. Upon graduating in 1980, Waldron was hired as a general assignment reporter at The Press of Atlantic City, where he reviewed the play 'Lena Horne: The Lady and Her Music.' In 1982, Phyllis Garland recommended Waldron for a position at the Johnson Publishing Company in Chicago, Illinois. He interviewed with chief executive John H. Johnson, and was hired as an assistant editor at Jet magazine under executive editor Robert E. Johnson. In the mid-1980s, Waldron wrote the first cover stories for musicians like Whitney Houston, Anita Baker and Luther Vandross.

Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Waldron, Section A2014\_022\_001\_006, TRT: 6:28:23  
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Clarence Waldron joined Jet magazine as an associate editor in 1982. At this point in the interview, Waldron remembers the celebrities who visited the Johnson Publishing Company offices in Chicago, Illinois, including singer Whitney Houston and her mother, Cissy Houston. He also talks about his most notable interviewees for Jet magazine, including politician Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, poet Maya Angelou, singer Jennifer Hudson and singer Tony Bennett. In 2000, Waldron interviewed the Nation of Islam's Minister Louis Farrakhan for his first cover story in Jet magazine. During the presidential campaign in 2008, he interviewed Barack Obama, whom he had met previously at the Hyde Park Hair Salon in Chicago. He also obtained an exclusive interview with singer Aretha Franklin during her illness in 2011. Waldron reflects upon the legacy of publishing chief executive John H. Johnson, and talks about other notable Chicago journalists, including columnists Theresa Fambro Hooks and Earl Calloway.

Video Oral History Interview with Clarence Waldron, Section A2014\_022\_001\_007, TRT: 7:38:15  
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Clarence Waldron was hired in 1998 as an adjunct professor at the Northwestern University Medill School of Journalism in Evanston, Illinois. While there, he emphasized the importance of accurate writing. Waldron also taught journalism at Columbia College Chicago in Chicago, Illinois. In 2010, he was recognized as a dean of arts and entertainment writers by the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ), and was featured on the front page of the Los Angeles Sentinel. In 2011, Waldron formally retired as a senior editor and writer for Jet magazine. He reflects upon the legacy of the Johnson Publishing Company, and talks about the mentorship of Ebony magazine editor Lerone Bennett and the changes in the field of journalism. He also reflects upon his life, legacy and family, and shares his concerns for the African American community. Waldron concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.