

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with LeRoy Winbush

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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>	Winbush, LeRoy, 1915-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with LeRoy Winbush,
<b>Dates:</b>	May 29, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:58:46).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Graphic designer LeRoy Winbush (1915 - 2007 ) founded his own graphic design business and created a name for himself as a scuba diver. Winbush revolutionized the window displays of banks, and earned a reputation as one of the country's top airbrush artists. He also worked as art director at Johnson Publishing Company for a decade, where he helped create the first issue of <i>Ebony</i> magazine. Winbush was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 29, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_095
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Renaissance man LeRoy Winbush was born on December 7, 1915, in Memphis, Tennessee. His many accomplishments include founding his own graphic design business and creating a name for himself as a scuba diver as well as a bowler and skier.

At age five, Winbush moved with his father to Detroit, Michigan, after his parents separated. He moved to Chicago at age fourteen and attended Englewood High School. He performed with a singing trio called the Melody Mixers, which gained attention through engagements at clubs and hotels as well as on CBS and NBC radio stations. After graduating from high school in 1936, Winbush worked at a sign shop as an apprentice. The Regal Theatre hired him in 1938 to design and paint the theater front. Then, he designed signs and displays as the only African American employee at Goldblatt's Department Store and eventually became their art director. In the 1940s, Winbush revolutionized the window displays of banks and earned a reputation as one of the country's top airbrush artists. He also worked as art director at Johnson Publishing Company for a decade, where he helped to create the first issue of *Ebony*. He then founded Winbush Designs in 1946.

After a solid career as a pioneering graphic designer, Winbush tackled a new challenge at age forty-eight: he learned how to swim at Chicago's Lawson YMCA. He enjoyed it so much that he studied scuba diving, qualifying for Lawson's 20 Fathom Club in 1966. He served as the club's president from 1968 to 1983. Winbush has led underwater expeditions all over the world, including the Red Sea, Dutch West Indies and Jamaica. He combines his love for diving and designing as an underwater photographer and has created oceanic exhibits in Florida's Epcot Center as well as Hong Kong's Ocean Park Museum. Winbush began ice diving in 1973.

Winbush has held many prestigious posts. He was the director of design for the Illinois Sesquicentennial

Celebration in 1967 and served as vice president of Our World Underwater, an annual seminar in Chicago, for seventeen years. He has been a design consultant for the DuSable Museum since 1992. Without having attended college or any art schools, Winbush became an assistant professor in visual communications at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He is currently writing his autobiography.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with LeRoy Winbush was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 29, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Graphic designer LeRoy Winbush (1915 - 2007 ) founded his own graphic design business and created a name for himself as a scuba diver. Winbush revolutionized the window displays of banks, and earned a reputation as one of the country's top airbrush artists. He also worked as art director at Johnson Publishing Company for a decade, where he helped create the first issue of Ebony magazine.

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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:

Winbush, LeRoy, 1915-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Winbush, LeRoy, 1915- --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:

Graphic Designer

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers

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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 LeRoy Winbush, May 29, 2002. 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 LeRoy Winbush, Section A2002\_095\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:48 ?

Graphic designer and scuba diver LeRoy Winbush begins by recalling his mother and father's backgrounds and the jobs they held in Detroit and Chicago. Winbush talks about his family's moves from Memphis to Detroit and subsequently to Chicago. He details his neighborhood in Detroit and then talks about his elementary school in Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with LeRoy Winbush, Section A2002\_095\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:13 ?

Graphic designer and scuba diver LeRoy Winbush remembers his early artistic development as a high school student and later as a sign painter. He also talks about the social environment at Englewood High School in Chicago, where he became friends with artist Charles White. Winbush then talks about methods he used as a sign painter and recounts his transition to becoming the art director of Goldblatt's department store.

Video Oral History Interview with LeRoy Winbush, Section A2002\_095\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:51 ?

Graphic designer and scuba diver LeRoy Winbush recounts his career path from art director at Goldblatt's department store, to art director of the Johnson Publishing Company. Winbush describing his duties at Johnson Publishing Company and names some of his co-workers. He also recalls how he avoided the draft during World War II, and how he became the first person to bring advertising to the banking industry. Winbush explains how his bank advertising work led to the establishment of his own design company, Winbush Associates.

Video Oral History Interview with LeRoy Winbush, Section A2002\_095\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:46 ?

Graphic designer and scuba diver LeRoy Winbush discusses his connections with other well-known Chicago artists, and his involvement in local and national art directors' clubs. He then comments on his many and varied outside interests, including developing a skill for scuba diving. Winbush notes his diving achievements and talks about the diving seminar he founded, Our World Underwater.

Video Oral History Interview with LeRoy Winbush, Section A2002\_095\_001\_005, TRT: 0:30:46 ?

Graphic designer and scuba diver LeRoy Winbush discusses his New Year's Day dives and other hobbies, such as playing the guitar. He also comments on the relationship between black design companies and their largely white clients. Finally, Winbush reflects on his life and career, evaluating his success and wondering what his family would say about his career.

Video Oral History Interview with LeRoy Winbush, Section A2002\_095\_001\_006, TRT: 0:29:22 ?