

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Conrad Walter Worrill

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Worrill, Conrad Walter, 1941-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Conrad Walter Worrill,
Dates:	December 15, 2009 and June 13, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002 and 2009
Physical Description:	11 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (4:55:58).
Abstract:	Nonprofit chief executive and african american studies professor Conrad Walter Worrill (1941 - 2020) is a reparations leader and chair of the National Black United Front. He traveled with a delegation to Geneva, Switzerland in 1997 to formally charge the U.S. Government with genocide and human right violations before the Commission on Human Rights. Worrill was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 15, 2009 and June 13, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2002_144
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Conrad Walter Worrill was born on August 15, 1941, in Pasadena, California. His mother, Anna Bell, was the first African American to sing in the Pasadena Philharmonic Orchestra and his father, Walter, was a college-educated YMCA manager. Conrad Worrill became an activist and scholar whose goal is to advance the cause and concept of African independence and self-determination both in the United States and internationally.

After moving to Chicago on his ninth birthday, Worrill became serious about athletics. He gained his first racial consciousness through competitive swimming when his black YMCA team faced serious heckling. In 1962, he was drafted into the Army and shipped to Okinawa, Japan. While overseas, he read profusely about African American history, culture and politics. After he returned to Chicago in 1963, Worrill attended George Williams College but became radicalized by the Black Power movement. After graduating in 1968, a West Side YMCA hired him as the program director. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He headed George Williams College's Urban Institute in 1973 and began teaching at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago in 1976, where he is the coordinator and professor of Inner City Studies Education. While organizing in 1983 to elect Chicago's first black mayor, Harold Washington, Worrill co-founded the Task Force for Black Political Empowerment. As the national chairman of the National Black United Front (NBUF), Worrill is working aggressively to change the American public school curriculum to be inclusive of the contributions of Africans and African Americans.

Worrill is the elected economic development commissioner of the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N'COBRA). He served as special consultant of field operations for the historic Million Man March/ Day of Absence on October 16, 1995, in Washington, D.C. As part of the fight to win reparations for the American descendants of slaves, he traveled to Geneva, Switzerland, in 1997 with a delegation to formally charge the U.S. Government with genocide and human right violations before the Commission on Human Rights. The delegation

presented the commission with a "Declaration of Genocide by the United States Government Against the Black Population in the United States" with 157,000 signatures.

Upon returning to the United States, Worrill presented this petition to the United Nations in New York City. In 2001, he led a 400-member delegation to the UN World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa. He writes the syndicated weekly column "Worrill's World," which is widely read in African American newspapers across the country. In August 2002, Worrill organized a national reparations rally attended by thousands.

Worrill passed away on June 3, 2020.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Conrad Walter Worrill was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 15, 2009 and June 13, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 11 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. Nonprofit chief executive and african american studies professor Conrad Walter Worrill (1941 - 2020) is a reparations leader and chair of the National Black United Front. He traveled with a delegation to Geneva, Switzerland in 1997 to formally charge the U.S. Government with genocide and human right violations before the Commission on Human Rights.

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:

Worrill, Conrad Walter, 1941-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Worrill, Conrad Walter, 1941- --Interviews

African American civic leaders--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

Northeastern Illinois University--Faculty--Interviews

African American intellectuals--Interviews

African American college teachers--Interviews

Georgia--Race relations

Fathers and sons

Robinson, Jackie, 1919-1972

Pasadena (Calif.)--Social conditions--1940s

High school athletes--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

Chicago (Ill.)--Social life and customs

Till, Emmett, 1941-1955--Death and burial

Vietnam War, 1961-1975

Civil rights movement

Nash, Diane, 1938-

Draft--United States

United States--Armed Forces--African Americans

Black Panther Party

Hampton, Fred, 1948-1969

Carmichael, Stokely

King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968--Assassination

University of Chicago

Young Men's Christian Association (Chicago, Ill.)

Black militant organizations--United States

Police murders--Illinois--Chicago

Segregation--Illinois--Chicago

Chicago (Ill.)--Social conditions--20th Century

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Northeastern Illinois University

Occupations:

Professor

HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

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 Conrad Walter Worrill, December 15, 2009 and June 13, 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).

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 Conrad Walter Worrill, Section A2002_144_001_001, TRT: 0:29:16 ?

Conrad Walter Worrill begins the interview by describing his father's family history and how the racial climate forced them to leave Georgia and settle in Pasadena, California in the 1920s. Worrill then shares stories about the high school track and field accomplishments of both his father and uncle, and their close friendship with Jackie and Matthew "Mack" Robinson. He then talks about his father's intellect and business savvy, and the good fortune he received in being able to attend college with the help of a white philanthropist.

African American civic leaders--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Northeastern Illinois University--Faculty--Interviews.

African American intellectuals--Interviews.

African American college teachers--Interviews.

Georgia--Race relations.

Fathers and sons.

Robinson, Jackie, 1919-1972.

Pasadena (Calif.)--Social conditions.

High school athletes--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Chicago (Ill.)--Social life and customs.

Till, Emmett, 1941-1955--Death and burial.

Vietnam War, 1961-1975.

Civil rights movements.

Nash, Diane, 1938-.

Draft--United States.

United States--Armed Forces--African Americans.

Black Panther Party.

Hampton, Fred, 1948-1969.

Carmichael, Stokely.

King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968--Assassination.

University of Chicago.

Young Men's Christian Association (Chicago, Ill.).

Black militant organizations--United States.

Police murders--Illinois--Chicago.

Segregation--Illinois--Chicago.

Chicago (Ill.)--Social conditions--20th century.

Video Oral History Interview with Conrad Walter Worrill, Section A2002_144_001_002, TRT: 0:29:59 ?

Conrad Walter Worrill discusses race relations in Pasadena, California in the 1940s, describing the city's efforts to deny civil service jobs to blacks. He then talks about his father's leadership role within Pasadena's NAACP and their battle to improve the quality of life for blacks and other minorities. Worrill then talks about his father's job transfer to Chicago and details his personal difficulty in adjusting to the move. He then talks about his experiences in school as a young boy and honing his athletic skills both in school and at the YMCA. Lastly, Worrill talks about his family's relationship with Jackie Robinson and shares a story about Jackie's visit to Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with Conrad Walter Worrill, Section A2002_144_001_003, TRT: 0:29:34 ?

Conrad Walter Worrill shares a story about his personal dealings with baseball great Jackie Robinson and compares his childhood environment in Pasadena with the bombardment of the senses he experienced in Chicago. Worrill then talks about his living role models and details his athletic exploits while in high school. He then talks about his race awareness coming to the fore with the murder of Emmett Till and the activity in the neighborhood surrounding that event. Lastly, Worrill talks about the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement serving as a backdrop to his lack of educational prowess and his rebellion against his father.

Video Oral History Interview with Conrad Walter Worrill, Section A2002_144_001_004, TRT: 0:30:08 ?

Conrad Walter Worrill talks about his gradual interest in the Civil Rights Movement, largely due to the accomplishments of former high school classmate, Diane Nash. He then details his activities in Japan after being drafted into the Army, and his undeniable good fortune in not having to experience armed conflict. Worrill then talks about his return from the war and his desire to get a college education after seeing many of his friends earn degrees. Lastly, he talks about his experiences as manager at the Wabash Avenue YMCA in Chicago, despite his aversion to following in his father's footsteps and his decision to get into social work after the experience gained.

Video Oral History Interview with Conrad Walter Worrill, Section A2002_144_001_005, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Conrad Walter Worrill discusses his decision to become more politically involved after his encounters with Black Panther leaders, Fred Hampton and Stokely Carmichael. After his job successes at the Wabash Ave. YMCA in Chicago, Worrill talks about his decision to transfer to California. He then details his sudden change of heart following the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and subsequent riots in the black neighborhoods. Worrill then talks about his assignment to the Sears YMCA branch on the West Side and the changes he implemented after the King riots to help the neighborhood heal. Lastly, he details his encounter with Abena Joan Brown and his decision to pursue a master's degree in social work at the University of Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with Conrad Walter Worrill, Section A2002_144_001_006, TRT: 0:29:49 ?

Conrad Walter Worrill talks briefly about Catalyst, an organization of social workers formed by Abena Joan Brown, and details the work they did to bring corporate dollars and agencies to the black neighborhoods. He then discusses the relationship between Dr. Martin Luther King and Chicago and his activities here. Following the murders of Black Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark, Worrill talks about the black civic leaders he encountered while manager at the Sears YMCA, and details the "Black Curfew" implemented on white people working in the black community. Lastly, he talks about the social programs designed to quell the racial unrest in the city, and his experiences in graduate school at the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration.

Video Oral History Interview with Conrad Walter Worrill, Section A2002_144_002_007, TRT: 0:28:44 ?

Conrad Walter Worrill was given an opportunity to direct the 28th Street YMCA in Los Angeles, California, where his father, Walter Fleming Worrill, had previously directed. After the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., however, Worrill chose to remain in Chicago, Illinois, where he worked at the Sears YMCA and befriended Fred Hampton. In 1969, Worrill was encouraged by Abena Joan P. Brown to attend graduate school. Although he initially resisted the idea, he eventually enrolled at the University of Chicago. While studying there, Worrill participated in his first political campaign, assisting Charles "Mwanza" Ross, Jr. in Gary, Indiana. They faced opposition from white steel unions. As an intern at the Black Strategy Center in 1971, Worrill was offered a fellowship to pursue his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He returned to Chicago regularly to attend Communiversity, which inspired his doctoral thesis on teaching institutional power in the secondary social studies curriculum.

Video Oral History Interview with Conrad Walter Worrill, Section A2002_144_002_008, TRT: 0:32:41 ?

Conrad Walter Worrill developed his Black Nationalist identity in the late 1960s while studying regularly at the Communiversity, where he learned about black revolutionary movements influenced by Maoism and Marxism. Worrill earned his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1973, and became an assistant professor at George Williams College, in addition to assuming leadership of their newly formed urban institute. After two and a half years, Worrill was offered a professorship at the Jacob H. Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies, where he taught history and culture of ethnic groups, introduction to inner city studies, history and philosophy of black education, revolutionary movements and research writing. Additionally, Worrill talks about the creation of the Jacob H. Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies at Northeastern Illinois University. He also describes the history of the Abraham Lincoln Center, and the civil unrest in the Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood in the 1910s and 1920s.

Video Oral History Interview with Conrad Walter Worrill, Section A2002_144_002_009, TRT: 0:22:00 ?

Conrad Walter Worrill was involved in the founding of the National Black United Front in 1980. The concept of the organization was first introduced in the late 1970s by Reverend Dr. Herbert D. Daughtry and Jitu Weusi of the Metropolitan Black United Front. By 1985, Worrill became chairman of the organization for the next twenty-five years. Worrill convened with members of the National Black United Front in New Orleans, Louisiana for the organization of the National Black Independent Political Party. While the local group in Chicago, Illinois established the long term goal of electing the first black mayor of the city, they first helped elect Jane Byrne who became the first female mayor

of Chicago. Additionally, Worrill talks about black Chicagoans' majority rule on the school board, and their criticisms of Byrne. He also describes conflicts between Marxists and nationalists in the Pan African movement as well as socialist theories and the existence of white supremacist ideas in revolutionary history.

Video Oral History Interview with Conrad Walter Worrill, Section A2002_144_002_010, TRT: 0:20:47 ?

Conrad Walter Worrill became involved in the campaign to support Harold Washington for mayor of Chicago, Illinois in 1982. Washington was reluctant to officially announce his candidacy run even after meeting his fundraising and voter registration goals, so Worrill gathered local leaders like Reverend Albert Richard Sampson, Lutrelle "Lu" F. Palmer, II, and Danny K. Davis to meet with Washington. Soon after, Washington released an official statement of his mayoral bid, and Worrill began working with African American, Latino and white leaders like Helen Schiller, Walter "Slim" Coleman, Jesus "Chuy" Garcia and Luis Gutierrez to garner further support for Washington's campaign. Washington was elected the following year in 1983. After Washington's sudden death in 1987, Worrill planned a commemorative event in his honor, where Aldermen Ed Smith and Timothy C. Evans tried to sway public support away from Eugene Sawyer in the 1987 mayoral election. However, Sawyer ultimately claimed the seat.

Video Oral History Interview with Conrad Walter Worrill, Section A2002_144_002_011, TRT: 0:13:30 ?

Conrad Walter Worrill took part in the Free South African Movement against apartheid in the mid-1980s. In 1987, Worrill traveled to Egypt with the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilization and Jacob H. Carruthers, Jr. to promote the study of African and Egyptian culture and history. A decade later, Worrill participated on campaigns with the National Black United Front to confront the Central Intelligence Agency for spreading crack cocaine in African American communities to fund the Contras in Nicaragua. Worrill's activist work continued in 2001 with the United Nation's World Conference against racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia in Durban, South Africa, where he successfully pushed for the transatlantic slave trade to be deemed a crime against humanity. At this point in the interview, Worrill talks about books on African American history, including 'In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s' by Clayborne Carson and 'The Maroon Within Us' by Asa G. Hilliard.