

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Bob Black

---

## 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>	Black, Bob, 1939-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Bob Black,
<b>Dates:</b>	February 27, 2003 and January 17, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:40:17).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Photographer Bob Black (1939 - ) worked for the Chicago Sun-Times, where he was awarded for his photography. He is also a founding member of the Chicago Alliance of African American Photographers, established in 1999, to bring together local African American photographers to promote their work and educate future generations. Black was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 27, 2003 and January 17, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_010
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Photographer Bob Black was born in Chicago, Illinois, on June 4, 1939. Black was one of five children, and attended Chicago public schools. After briefly attending Woodrow Wilson Junior College, Black began working.

Black started his career as a professional photographer in 1965, working at the *Chicago Defender* as a staff photographer. By the time Black joined the *Defender*, it had already established itself as the largest African American-owned newspaper in the nation, and had been fighting for full equality for African Americans since its inception in 1905. In 1968, Black left the *Defender* for the *Chicago Sun-Times* where he remains today as a photographer.

As a member of the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ), Black was one of the founders of the Visual Task Force, an organization of still and video photographers within the NABJ. He is also a founding member of the Chicago Alliance of African American Photographers (CAAAP), established in 1999 to bring together local African American photographers to promote their work and educate future generations.

Black has been the recipient of numerous awards, including collecting first place at the World Press Photo Competition. He also actively pursues projects outside his work for the newspaper, including a series of photographs of life in the Dominican Republic and a series of photographs displayed along with other CAAAP members at the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Bob Black was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 27, 2003 and January 17, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Photographer Bob Black (1939 - ) worked for the Chicago Sun-Times, where he was awarded for his photography. He is also a founding member of the Chicago Alliance of African American Photographers, established in 1999, to bring together local African American photographers to promote their work and educate future generations.

---

## 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:

Black, Bob, 1939-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Black, Bob, 1939---Interviews

---

## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

## The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

### Occupations:

Photographer

---

### HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers

---

## 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 Bob Black, February 27, 2003 and January 17, 2003. 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 Bob Black, Section A2003\_010\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Bob Black was born on June 4, 1939 to Elaine Curry Black (later Martin) and Clarence Henry Black, Jr. His mother was born around 1919 to Janie Curry and Robert Curry, in Chicago, Illinois and worked as a hair stylist. His father was born around 1918 to Marie Black and Clarence Black, Sr. and was a postal worker. Black's parents met while attending Berean Baptist Church in Chicago, Illinois. During World War II, his father fought in the Philippines. His mother

was a musician and a pillar in the church, and later remarried to Herbert Martin. Black grew up in the Washington Park neighborhood of Chicago, where he attended William W. Carter Elementary School and Englewood High School. He was active in his school's safety patrol and in the Boy Scouts, where he was a staff member at Camp Blackhawk on the Owasippe Scout Reservation in Twin Lake, Michigan and a member of the Order of the Arrow. Black's three brothers, Arnold, Clarence, and David were also Boy Scouts.

Video Oral History Interview with Bob Black, Section A2003\_010\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:41 ?

Bob Black and his brothers were members of the Boy Scouts and the drum and bugle corps of the American Legion Post. They were also mentored by two teachers who lived in the area: Emma Stacker and Mrs. Trotter. At Englewood High School, Black was a member of the choir and ROTC as well as friends with HistoryMaker George Carruthers. At this time, he also started learning about photography from the members of the Berean Baptist Church camera club, including Reverend William Vance, Bobby Orr, and Billy Lites. These men let Black use their equipment and mentored him. Black graduated from high school in 1957 and began freelancing for the Chicago Defender, where he met photojournalists Cleo Lyles and Tony Rhoden. In the early 1960s, Black joined the Illinois National Guard to avoid fighting in the Vietnam War. He was initially an Infantryman in the 8th Regiment, but joined the Signal Corps after integration and was placed in the photography unit.

Video Oral History Interview with Bob Black, Section A2003\_010\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Bob Black began working at the Chicago Defender shortly after his high school graduation in 1957 as a contributor to its "Teen Page." He continued to work as a freelancer, learning from photojournalists Cleo Lyle and Tony Rhoden and inspired by HistoryMaker Gordon Parks' photos in Life Magazine. In the early 1960s, Black became a photographer for the Illinois National Guard. In 1965, Black was hired by HistoryMaker Robert Sengstacke as a full-time photographer for the Chicago Defender, where he worked with reporters including Dave Potter and Betty Washington and covered Father James Groppi and the Milwaukee open housing marches. In 1968, Black used his position in the Illinois National Guard to take photographs of the riots in Chicago, Illinois after the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. After the riots, Bob Langer hired Black at the Chicago Sun-Times. Black was the second African American photojournalist to work for a white Chicago newspaper, following his friend and mentor John Tweedle.

Video Oral History Interview with Bob Black, Section A2003\_010\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:00 ?

Bob Black continued to work for the Chicago Sun-Times, where his daily schedule took him to crime scenes, political functions, accidents, and society gatherings. He reflects upon the changes caused by digital cameras and phones, as well as the dangers of being a first responder. Black describes the conditions he has put himself in for stories, including the police brutality he faced while covering the 1968 Democratic National Convention, houses on fire, and horrific crime scenes. He describes two events that he covered, the 1968 North Central Airlines crash at O'Hare International Airport and the 1972 Illinois Central Gulf train crash in Chicago, Illinois, and reflects upon the ethical question of whether he would save someone's life or take a picture first if forced to choose. He names some of the remarkable people he met and photographed, including Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Chicago Mayor Harold Washington.

Video Oral History Interview with Bob Black, Section A2003\_010\_002\_005, TRT: 0:31:12 ?

Bob Black narrates his photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Bob Black, Section A2003\_010\_002\_006, TRT: 0:13:04 ?

Bob Black continues to narrate his photographs.