

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Larkin Arnold

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Arnold, Larkin, 1942-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Larkin Arnold,
Dates:	July 10, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:13:44).
Abstract:	Talent management chief executive, entertainment lawyer, and music executive Larkin Arnold (1942 -) started his own legal and management firm, Arnold & Associates. He was senior vice president for Arista Records and CBS/Sony Music, where he marketed and promoted Michael Jackson's album, "Thriller." Arnold was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 10, 2007, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_202
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Entertainment lawyer, music executive and talent management chief executive Larkin Arnold, Jr. was born on September 3, 1942, in Kansas City, Missouri to Larkin and Annie Arnold. When Arnold was in elementary school, the family moved to Phoenix, Arizona, for his mother's health. In Kansas City and Phoenix, Arnold attended Catholic schools. He received his B.S. degree in political science from American University in Washington, D.C. in 1966, and graduated from Howard University Law School in 1969.

In 1970, Arnold became one of the first African Americans to be hired as an attorney by a major record label when he joined Capitol Records. Four years later, he was promoted to vice president of Capitol Records, creating and heading the company's Black Music Division. In 1975, Arnold signed Natalie Cole to Capitol Records and, in 1977, he served as the executive producer for Caldera's record *Sky Island*. That same year, he signed Maze featuring Frankie Beverly, the former backup band for Marvin Gaye. In 1978, Arnold left Capitol Records for Arista Records. As senior vice president, Arnold ran the West Coast office and was in charge of bringing in new artists and products. Arnold held this position until he was hired in 1980 by CBS/SONY Music as senior vice president. There, he spearheaded the marketing and promotion of Michael Jackson's *Thriller* album that sold over twenty-five million units worldwide. Arnold also represented Teena Marie, Luther Vandross, Surface, Peabo Bryson and The Reflections. In 1988, Arnold founded Arnold & Associates, one of the few wholly integrated legal and management teams in the record industry.

Arnold co-founded the Black Entertainment and Sports Lawyers Association, serving as its chairman for eight years. He has served on the boards of the Los Angeles Board of Governors of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, the Executive Committee of XI Boule Fraternity, the United Negro College Fund Ladders of Hope Program, and the Los Angeles Zoo Commission. Arnold has received numerous honors and awards including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Executive of the Year Award,

Outstanding Graduate Award of Howard University School of Law, the Distinguished Graduate Award of Howard University, the Congressional Black Caucus Outstanding Citizen Award, the Langston Bar Association Lawyer of the Year Award, the NATRA Award for Record Executive of the Year, Pollstar Award for R&B Manager of the Year, the Thurgood Marshall Scholarship Award for Outstanding Community Leadership and a 100 Black Men Honor.

Arnold is married to Cynthia Arnold and is the father of two children.

Larkin Arnold was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 10, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Larkin Arnold was conducted by Jacques Lesure on July 10, 2007, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Talent management chief executive, entertainment lawyer, and music executive Larkin Arnold (1942 -) started his own legal and management firm, Arnold & Associates. He was senior vice president for Arista Records and CBS/Sony Music, where he marketed and promoted Michael Jackson's album, "Thriller."

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:

Arnold, Larkin, 1942-

Lesure, Jacques (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Arnold, Larkin, 1942- --Interviews

African American sound recording executives and producers--Interviews.

African American lawyers--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Entertainment Lawyer

Talent Management Chief Executive

Music Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

EntertainmentMakers|LawMakers|MusicMakers

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 Larkin Arnold, July 10, 2007. 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 Larkin Arnold, Section A2007_202_001_001, TRT: 0:28:11 ?

Larkin Arnold was born on September 3, 1942 in Kansas City, Missouri to Hattie Alston Arnold and Larkin Arnold, Sr. His maternal grandfather, William Crump, moved in 1890 from West Virginia to Arizona, where he established a farmers market, and owned property. He also married Virginia Crump, with whom he raised nine children as Catholics, including Arnold's mother. Arnold's father was born in Arkansas, and moved to Kansas City, where he graduated high school, and worked in a garment factory. After Arnold's parents met and married, his father owned a dry cleaning business, while his mother worked at a hospital. As a child in segregated Kansas City, Arnold attended Kansas City Monarchs baseball games, and studied at the all-black St. Monica Catholic School. When his mother fell ill, he and his sister were sent to live with relatives in Phoenix, Arizona, where Arnold attended the integrated St. Mary's Catholic High School. There, he was encouraged by his teacher, Sister Mary Elizabeth.

African American families--Missouri--Kansas City.

African American families--Arizona--Phoenix.

African American Catholics.

Catholic schools--Arizona--Phoenix.

Catholic schools--Missouri--Kansas City.

School integration--United States.

Boy Scouts of America.

Video Oral History Interview with Larkin Arnold, Section A2007_202_001_002, TRT: 0:29:41 ?

Larkin Arnold excelled in math and physics at St. Mary's Catholic High School in Phoenix, Arizona. He was placed in advanced courses, and experienced discrimination from his teachers, who accounted for his intellect by claiming he was partly white. Arnold aspired to become an electrical engineer, and obtained a college scholarship with the help of his neighbor, chemist Percy Lavon Julian. From 1960, Arnold attended Howard University in Washington, D.C., where his peers included Dennis Hightower, Sharon Pratt and Togo D. West, Jr., all of whom went on to careers in public service. While living in Charles R. Drew Hall, Arnold befriended activist Stokely Carmichael, who drew his attention to color discrimination at the university. Arnold joined the Nonviolent Action Group, and later the SNCC. After his first year, he lost his engineering scholarship because of his poor drafting skills; and, to pay his sophomore tuition, worked as a bellhop in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

African American Catholics--Arizona--Phoenix.

Howard University.

Carmichael, Stokely.

Swygert, H. Patrick.

Hightower, Dennis (Dennis Fowler), 1941-.

West, Togo D., 1942-.

Franklin, Shirley, 1945-.

Kelly, Sharon Pratt, 1944-.

African American student movements--Washington (D.C.).

African Americans--Study and teaching (Higher).

Video Oral History Interview with Larkin Arnold, Section A2007_202_001_003, TRT: 0:28:42 ?

Larkin Arnold was hired by Missouri Senator Stuart Symington to work as the first African American elevator operator on Capitol Hill in 1962, during the administration of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Arnold transferred from Howard University to American University, where he took night courses in political science. Upon graduating in 1966, Arnold was awarded a scholarship to the Howard University School of Law. During his studies, Arnold served with the U.S. Capitol Police; where, as the first black officer on the force, he experienced discrimination, and was assigned the most challenging shifts. In 1963, Arnold monitored the March on Washington, and guarded President Kennedy as he laid in state after his death. He was also called to guard the U.S. Capitol after the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968. He remained active with SNCC, where Marion Barry was his field secretary, and his former classmate, Stokely Carmichael, was the organization's chairman.

African Americans--Employment--Washington (D.C.).

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (U.S.).

Carmichael, Stokely.

Barry, Marion, 1936-.

Howard University.

American University (Washington, D.C.).

Social conditions--United States.

African Americans--Study and teaching.

African American parents--Death.

Video Oral History Interview with Larkin Arnold, Section A2007_202_001_004, TRT: 0:28:50 ?

Larkin Arnold's former classmate, Ross Fields, recruited him as legal counsel at his disco nightclub in Washington, D.C., which hosted acts like The Marvelettes and Patti LaBelle. During this time, singer Jerry Butler encouraged Arnold to become an entertainment attorney. After graduating from the Howard University School of Law in 1969, Arnold looked unsuccessfully for such a position in New York City. He then flew to Los Angeles, California to meet with Stanley M. Gortikov, the president of Capitol Records, LLC, who arranged an interview with Robert E. Carp, the head of general counsel at the label. Arnold was hired in 1970, and became the first black attorney at an entertainment company. During Arnold's first two years at Capitol Records, LLC, his work focused on patents, trademarks and copyright lawsuits. He then moved to negotiating artist contracts, including that of singer Nancy Wilson. Arnold also presented seminars on entertainment law at the National Bar Association.

Howard University. School of Law.

African Americans--Study and teaching (Higher).

African American lawyers.

Sound recording industry.

Sound recording industry--Law and legislation.

National Bar Association.

Video Oral History Interview with Larkin Arnold, Section A2007_202_001_005, TRT: 0:30:50 ?

Larkin Arnold turned down a position at Motown Records in 1974, and remained with Capitol Records, LLC, where he conducted field research to improve the company's reputation in the black music market. He managed the label's new black division, and later became its vice president. In this role, Arnold hired Motown executive William "Mickey" Stevenson, redesigned the label and developed relationships with black radio deejays like Rocky Jones. He signed artists like Tavares, whose album 'Check It Out' became a number one hit, as well as singer Natalie Cole. In 1975, Arnold co-produced Cole's album 'Inseparable' with Marvin Yancy and Chuck Jackson. By 1978, Arnold had turned the division's \$5 million annual loss into a \$25 million annual net profit, and had signed two Grammy Award winning artists, Cole and A Taste of Honey. That year, Arnold became the senior vice president of Clive Davis' Arista Records, where he developed the label's infrastructure, and worked with artists like Dionne Warwick.

Sound recording industry.

African Americans--Marriage.

Capitol Records, Inc.

Arista (Firm).

African American recording executives and producers.

Tavares (Musical group).

Bryson, Peabo.

Cole, Natalie, 1950-.

Davis, Clive.

GQ (Musical group).

Warwick, Dionne.

Video Oral History Interview with Larkin Arnold, Section A2007_202_001_006, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Larkin Arnold became the senior vice president of CBS/Sony Records Inc. in 1980, and headed the company's Columbia Records and Epic Records labels. During his tenure, he restructured the organization so that black artists were compensated fairly. In 1981, Arnold signed Luther Vandross for his debut album, 'Never Too Much.' He also convinced Michael Jackson to join Epic Records, where Jackson and producer Quincy Jones created the album 'Thriller' in 1982. Arnold spearheaded the album's promotion; and, at the behest of management, released "The Girl Is Mine," featuring Paul McCartney, as the album's first single to appeal to white radio stations. Also in 1982, Arnold signed singer Marvin Gaye to Columbia Records. After the release of Gaye's album 'Midnight Love,' CBS/Sony Records refused to promote the album's single "Sexual Healing" on white pop stations. In 1988, Arnold founded the Arnold and Associates entertainment management law firm, which represented acts like Mint Condition.

Sound recording industry.

Music trade.

African American sound recording executives and producers.

African American lawyers.

Sony Music Entertainment, Inc.

Epic Music Video (Firm).

Columbia Records, Inc.

Jackson, Michael, 1958-2009.

Vandross, Luther.

Gaye, Marvin.

Video Oral History Interview with Larkin Arnold, Section A2007_202_001_007, TRT: 0:17:20 ?

Larkin Arnold helped to found the Black Entertainment and Sports Lawyers Association in 1980, and served as its chairman for eight years. He was awarded the NAACP Executive of the Year Award, as well as the Outstanding Graduate Award of Howard University School of Law, where he served on the board of visitors. He describes his hopes and concerns for the African American music industry, and his advice for young executives in Corporate America. He also talks about his family, including his wife, Cynthia Watson Arnold; and sons, Derek Arnold and Kevin Arnold. Arnold reflects upon his life and how he would like to be remembered, and then concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.

Sound recording industry--Vocational guidance.

Professional associations--Law and legislation.