

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Hamilton Cloud, II

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Cloud, Hamilton, 1952-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Hamilton Cloud, II,
Dates:	April 29, 2011 and April 30, 2011
Bulk Dates:	2011
Physical Description:	13 uncompressed MOV digital video files (6:06:10).
Abstract:	Talent agent and television producer Hamilton Cloud, II (1952 -) produced the NAACP Image Awards from 1987 to 2000. In 1987, the Image Awards were broadcast on a national television network for the first time. Cloud has worked with a number of other companies, including NBC, Playboy Entertainment Group, and QDE. Cloud was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 29, 2011 and April 30, 2011, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2011_036
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Television producer and talent agent Hamilton Cloud, II, was born on November 30, 1952, in Los Angeles, California. His father, Hamilton Cloud, Sr. was one of a few African Americans trained at the Northwestern University Dental School at the time of his graduation. Cloud grew up in Los Angeles but pursued his education at Yale University, where he earned his B.A. degree for his studies in “Communications: Mass Media and Black America,” a concentration that he originated.

Working with radio programs in Los Angeles for fifteen years, Cloud established himself within the media industry. His interests then turned to television programming, producing children’s and public affairs programs. In 1978, Cloud joined the network programming department at the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), and he became the vice president of Current Comedy Programs in 1982. In this role, he supervised the weekly production of a number of well-known comedy series, including *Cheers* and *Family Ties*. Cloud began his work in producing the NAACP Image Awards in 1987. The 19th Annual NAACP Image Awards, when broadcasted on NBC, marked the first time the show was aired on a national television network. Cloud served as the producer of the annual show for fourteen more years.

In 1990, Cloud supervised and developed programming for Playboy Entertainment Group’s cable, home video and television divisions. Within three years, he was chosen serve as the vice president of Quincy Jones/David Salzman Entertainment (QDE), supervising first-run television, special events and interactive programming. After creating Thundercloud Productions in 1995, Cloud became the senior vice-president of Letnom Productions the following year. He continued to produce television shows such as *The Montel Williams Show* and events like *Game of the Century*, a baseball event to recognize the legacy of the Negro Baseball Leagues.

Cloud has served on a number of boards, including the Hall of Fame and the Prime Time Emmy Award Committees of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. He has also been a member of the WGA and The Caucus of Producers, Writers and Directors.

Cloud is married to Fukue Yamaguchi. The couple has one daughter.

Hamilton Cloud was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on April 29, 2011.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Hamilton Cloud, II was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 29, 2011 and April 30, 2011, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 13 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Talent agent and television producer Hamilton Cloud, II (1952 -) produced the NAACP Image Awards from 1987 to 2000. In 1987, the Image Awards were broadcast on a national television network for the first time. Cloud has worked with a number of other companies, including NBC, Playboy Entertainment Group, and QDE.

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:

Cloud, Hamilton, 1952-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Cloud, Hamilton, 1952- --Interviews

African American television producers and directors--California--Los Angeles--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

QDE

National Broadcasting Company

Occupations:

Talent Agent

Television Producer

HistoryMakers® Category:

EntertainmentMakers

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 Hamilton Cloud, II, April 29, 2011 and April 30, 2011. 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 Hamilton Cloud, II, Section A2011_036_001_001, TRT: 1:30:51
?

Hamilton Cloud describes his family's history. His mother, Frances Willard Smith Cloud, was born in Chicago, Illinois in December of 1927. She traced her roots to Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Her parents moved to Chicago, where her father worked as a mail carrier and owned a music store and her mother was a homemaker. Cloud's father, Hamilton Strawbridge Cloud, was born in February of 1921 in Birmingham, Alabama. His father, Frank Herman Cloud, was a pioneering professional photographer. Cloud talks about his trip to Knoxville, Tennessee in the 1990s, meeting a relative there, visiting his paternal great-grandparents' graves, and his great-grandfather being killed for teaching black children to read in Millers Ferry, Alabama. He also talks about his mother's interest in dance and social work, how his parents met and married, and his father's training as a dentist after his return from serving in the U.S. Navy during World War II.

African American families.

African American mothers--Illinois--Chicago.

African American fathers--Illinois--Chicago.

United States--Armed Forces--African Americans.

Traveling--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Hamilton Cloud, II, Section A2011_036_001_002, TRT: 2:30:57
?

Hamilton Cloud's father, Hamilton Strawbridge Cloud, was born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama. He attended Talladega College at the age of fourteen, joined the U.S. Navy and served in World War II. He then joined the Army and received funding to attend Northwestern Dental School in Chicago, Illinois. In 1950, Cloud's parents moved to Los Angeles, California, and his father was sent to the Korean War. Cloud's father objected to Cloud being drafted into the Vietnam War. He discusses his paternal grandparents, his paternal grandfather's photography, his favorite memory of his maternal grandfather, his childhood in Los Angeles, the neighborhood where he grew up, race relations, and his experience in school. He also talks about his father's friend, HistoryMaker Leo Branton, his family's interest in music and dance, his siblings, and his likeness to his parents.

African American fathers.

United States--Armed Forces--African Americans.

Northwestern University (Evanston, Ill.).

Relocation (Housing).

African American grandfathers.

Draft--United States.

Childhood and youth--Activities--California--Los Angeles.

Branton, Leo, Jr., 1922-2013.

African American families.

Video Oral History Interview with Hamilton Cloud, II, Section A2011_036_001_003, TRT: 3:30:42
?

Hamilton Cloud was raised in Los Angeles, California, where he attended University High School on the West Side of the city. He discusses his academics, mentors and extracurricular activities in school. Cloud recalls his parents' support of the Civil Rights Movement, and the party that his parents and friends gave for Dr. Martin Luther King on his thirty-ninth birthday. He talks about his interest in television and radio as a child, his favorite movie, 'The Magnificent Seven', starring Steve McQueen and Yul Brynner, playing football near Ray Charles' home, and his parents exposing he and his siblings to the arts. In 1970, Cloud graduated from high school and began his undergraduate studies at Yale University. He describes his decision to attend Yale, and his positive experience there.

Childhood and youth--Activities--California--Los Angeles.

African Americans--Education, Secondary--California--Los Angeles.

Civil rights movements.

King, Martin Luther Jr., 1929-1968.

Yale University.

Video Oral History Interview with Hamilton Cloud, II, Section A2011_036_001_004, TRT: 4:30:49
?

Hamilton Cloud worked at Yale University's radio station, WYBC, and two mainstream stations, WELI and WEZN. He describes WYBC's programming, and its place as a cultural focal point in New Haven. Cloud discusses how he got his first mainstream radio job at WELI, taking a semester off from college to concentrate on his work, his father's excellence as a dentist and his modest income, and paying his own way through college. After graduating from Yale University, Cloud accepted a job at KFWB radio in Los Angeles, worked weekends at KAGB radio, and taught at Los Angeles City College. He then moved to television at the ABC station there, before being hired by NBC. At NBC, Cloud was involved in the production of the popular television mini-series 'Shogun' and the television movie 'Grambling's White Tiger'. He talks about the Japanese American community's reception of 'Shogun', his mentor, Brandon Tartikoff, and his role as Vice President of Current Comedy at NBC.

WYBC (Radio station : New Haven, Conn.).

Yale University.

WELI (Radio station : New Haven, Conn.).

African American fathers.

KFWB (Radio station : Hollywood, Calif.).

National Broadcasting Company.

American Broadcasting Company.

Tartikoff, Brandon

Video Oral History Interview with Hamilton Cloud, II, Section A2011_036_001_005, TRT: 5:29:29
?

Hamilton Cloud worked at NBC in Los Angeles, California, from 1978 to 1984, where he also served as Vice President of Current Comedy Programs from 1982

to 1984. He talks about the popular sitcoms that aired on NBC in the 1980s. In 1984, Cloud left NBC and started his own firm, 'Imaginary Entertainment'. He spent fourteen years as the producer and executive producer of the annual NAACP Image Awards for telecast on NBC. He was involved in the first telecast in 1986, and he describes how the telecast began and the honorees. He also talks about planning a successful tribute to Oprah Winfrey one year.

National Broadcasting Company.

Imaginary Entertainment.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People--Awards.

Winfrey, Oprah.

Video Oral History Interview with Hamilton Cloud, II, Section A2011_036_002_006, TRT: 6:28:40
?

Hamilton Cloud served as the producer and executive producer of the annual NAACP Image Awards that aired on both NBC and FOX television networks for fourteen years. He talks about introducing 'Name that Tune', his responsibilities as producer, some of his proudest moments, and the audience demographics. Cloud talks about why his fall out Kweisi Mfume, who was the NAACP president at the time, caused him to leave the show. He also talks about his production and personal management company, Imaginary Entertainment, which he cofounded in 1984.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People--Awards.

Mfume, Kweisi.

Imaginary Entertainment.

Television--Production and direction.

Video Oral History Interview with Hamilton Cloud, II, Section A2011_036_002_007, TRT: 7:29:13
?

Hamilton Cloud and his friend, Jay Levy, co-founded Imaginary Entertainment, a production and personal management company, in 1984. Cloud describes his work with Imaginary Entertainment, and their clients. He describes working with Miriam Makeba, Paul Simon's 'Graceland' tour, featuring Makeba as well as Hugh Masekela, and Jon Hendricks of the vocalese group, 'Lambert, Hendricks and Ross'. He also talks about the initial reaction from anti-Apartheid activists during Paul Simon's 'Graceland' tour, prominent artists giving credit to other artists who worked with them and inspired their work, and attending Nelson Mandela's birthday concert in London. Cloud also talks about the significance of Mandela's release from prison in 1990, and working with Stevie Wonder to gain national recognition for Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday.

Imaginary Entertainment.

Simon, Paul, 1941-

Mandela, Nelson, 1918-2013.

Wonder, Stevie.

Makeba, Miriam.

Video Oral History Interview with Hamilton Cloud, II, Section A2011_036_002_008, TRT: 8:29:37
?

Hamilton Cloud talks about his most significant radio shows during his long career in the radio industry. He describes his public affairs show, 'Speak Out', and other shows including 'Innervisions' and 'Black Spectrum'. Cloud also talks about honoring Bob Marley posthumously at the NAACP Image Awards, and organizing a gala for President Bill Clinton and the Heads of States of the

western hemisphere. Cloud also recalls working with Quincy Jones, and writing the mockumentary, 'The Compleat Al', while his company, Imaginary Entertainment, managed Al Yankovic.

Marley, Bob.

Clinton, Bill, 1946-

Yankovic, Al, 1959-

Jones, Quincy, 1933-

Video Oral History Interview with Hamilton Cloud, II, Section A2011_036_002_009, TRT: 9:29:28 ?

Hamilton Cloud worked at Playboy Entertainment Group from 1990 to 1993 in their cable, home video, international and domestic television divisions. He describes his decision to work at Playboy, and his experience there. From 1993 to 1995, he served as the Vice President of Quincy Jones/David Salzman Entertainment, where he worked on 'The Roots of Country' and 'The Concert of the Americas'. Cloud describes working with talk-show host Montel Williams, and talks about Montel's struggle with multiple sclerosis. He also describes the work of producing 'Game of the Century', a salute to the Negro Baseball Leagues at Dodger Stadium, and how it happened through his contacts with his former assistant and her husband, Stacy and Ted Milner. Cloud then talks about his wife, Fukue Yamaguchi, and their happy marriage.

Playboy Enterprises.

QDE.

Williams, Montel.

Negro Leagues--California--Los Angeles.

Spouses.

Video Oral History Interview with Hamilton Cloud, II, Section A2011_036_002_010, TRT: 10:29:22 ?

Hamilton Cloud describes his work with Ted Milner in the production of 'Game of the Century', a salute to the Negro Baseball Leagues at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles, California. He also talks about his work with a beauty pageant show for historically black colleges and universities, and a step-dance competition called "Stomp." In 2004, Cloud worked with Congresswoman Maxine Waters to produce a tribute to Maynard Jackson at the Democratic National Convention in Boston, Massachusetts. He also produced tributes for Rainbow Push and the NAACP at the 2008 Democratic National Convention in Denver, Colorado. Cloud goes on to talk about the artist D Knowledge, and producing a record album with him.

Negro leagues--California--Los Angeles.

African American universities and colleges.

Waters, Maxine.

Gilbert, Derrick I. M.

Democratic National Convention.

Video Oral History Interview with Hamilton Cloud, II, Section A2011_036_002_011, TRT: 11:31:14 ?

Hamilton Cloud joined Congresswoman Maxine Waters' staff as Director of Special Projects in 2010. Cloud describes Congressman Waters, her dedication to service, and his role on her staff. Cloud also describes his involvement in the opening of the Muhammad Ali Center in Louisville, Kentucky, age discrimination in the entertainment industry and elsewhere, and the

shortsightedness of attempts to abolish unions. He reflects upon his life and career as well as his legacy.

Waters, Maxine.

Discrimination.

Labor unions.

Video Oral History Interview with Hamilton Cloud, II, Section A2011_036_002_012, TRT: 12:26:16 ?

Hamilton Cloud describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community, and reflects on their dwindling representation in Hollywood. He also talks about his role as Congresswoman Maxine Waters media representative.

Waters, Maxine.

African Americans--Hollywood (Los Angeles, Calif.).

Video Oral History Interview with Hamilton Cloud, II, Section A2011_036_002_013, TRT: 13:09:32 ?

Hamilton Cloud talks about his family and how he would like to be remembered. He ends his interview by describing his photographs.

African American families.

Photographs.