

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Charles Whitaker

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Education is key - Civics Education Oral History project

Interview # ECE-A-L-2020-057

Charles Whitaker, Dean at the Medill School of Journalism, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Education is Key – Civics Education* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Aug 19, 2020 Location: Telephonic interview

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Philip Pogue, ALPL volunteer

Technical Support (cameraman, etc):

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript being
processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:18 / 1.3 hrs

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on (2/9/2021).

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Charles Whitaker, *Education is Key-Civics*, ECE-A-L-2020-057

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: Charles Whitaker was born in Chicago, Illinois in October 1958. He attended Chicago Public Schools, graduating from South Shore High School in 1976. While at South Shore Charles was involved with the school newspaper, served as sports editor, and worked with the daily school television production. Charles received both BA and MA degrees from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. At the time of this interview he was working on his PhD at Northwestern in the field of Human Development and Social Policy. Charles has worked for the Norfolk *Ledger Star*, the Miami *Herald*, and the Louisville *Times*. Charles was a senior editor at *Ebony Magazine*, which led him to assignments in four continents. Returning to Medill in 1993, Charles taught at the School of Professional Studies and the Journalism Institute. He was also a director for Medill's graduate Magazine Publishing Project and served as director for the Academy for Alternative Journalism. By 2020 Whitaker served as the Dean at Medill. Charles and has co-authored *Magazine Writing*, a textbook that covers the magazine industry. He also has been an editorial consultant to the *Catalyst*, which covered Chicago Public School issues, and has been on the editorial board of the investigative publication *Chicago Reporter*.

Dean Whitaker discussed media literacy and the preparation of future journalists from his perspective as a practicing journalist as well as Dean of the Medill School of Journalism. He covers course content at Medill, the Society of Professional Journalists' ethical standards, and challenges in journalism. Those include a changing economic model, decline of local media/newspapers, omission of stories, vetting, diversity, and the rise of social media. Whitaker discusses the effort at Northwestern to have journalism majors take classes in the humanities and in science. He also covers magazine editing through his experiences at *Ebony*. The challenges of having diverse speakers on campus was addressed and its impact upon school newspaper coverage. Another topic discussed was the impact of going to remote learning March 2020, and the challenge of covering 2020 related issues, including the pandemic, protests/civil unrest, policing, statutes/monuments and cancel culture, political corruption in Illinois, local/state/federal elections and immigration.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University; reporting and editing experiences with *Ebony Magazine*; challenges facing journalism; media literacy; civics education in Illinois high schools; remote learning during COVID-19 pandemic; Society of Professional Journalists' ethical standards

Notes to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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