

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Marva Collins

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Collins, Marva
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Marva Collins,
Dates:	February 2, 2000
Bulk Dates:	2000
Physical Description:	3 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:29:28).
Abstract:	Teacher and education administrator Marva Collins (1936 - 2015) was the founder of the Westside Preparatory School in Chicago, Illinois, as well as schools in Wisconsin, Ohio, and Florida. Collins also worked within the Chicago Public Schools and, in 1982, was honored as one of the 'Legendary Women of the World.' Collins was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 2, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2000_017
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

A woman passionate about learning, Marva Collins received her early education in Atmore, Alabama, a town where the segregated school system provided very few resources for African American students. Marva eventually attended Clark College in Atlanta and, after graduation, returned to Alabama. She taught for two years in the Alabama school system before moving to Chicago, where she worked in the public school system for fourteen years.

Frustrated by the Chicago Public Schools' low standards, Collins decided to open her own school in 1975 on the second floor of her home, naming it the Westside Preparatory School. The first students included her son, daughter and several neighborhood children, some of which were considered learning-disabled. At the end of the first year, every student scored at least five grades higher on their standardized tests. Soon, Collins' success attracted national attention. She and the Westside Preparatory School were profiled by *60 Minutes*, *Good Morning America*, *Time* and *Newsweek*, and were the subject of a television movie, *The Marva Collins Story*.

Her achievements prompted President Ronald Reagan to offer her the post of secretary of education, which she declined in order to continue the development of Westside Preparatory School. At the end of 1996, Collins decided to return to the Chicago Public Schools to supervise three schools that had been placed on probation. She specifically requested the schools with the worst academic records and lowest parental involvement, and in only half a year improved the rating of two of the three schools by 85 percent. During the following year, the Marva Collins Preparatory School of Wisconsin opened its doors to its first class of students, and other schools have since opened in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Florida. Collins trained more than 100,000 teachers since the opening of the Westside Preparatory School and traveled to Africa with the Young Presidents' Organization in order to spread her methodology to educators worldwide. She received more than forty honorary degrees and in 1982 was honored as one of the Legendary Women of the World.

Collins passed away on June 24, 2015 at the age of 78.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Marva Collins was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on February 2, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 3 Betacame SP videocassettes. Teacher and education administrator Marva Collins (1936 - 2015) was the founder of the Westside Preparatory School in Chicago, Illinois, as well as schools in Wisconsin, Ohio, and Florida. Collins also worked within the Chicago Public Schools and, in 1982, was honored as one of the 'Legendary Women of the World.'

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:

Collins, Marva

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Collins, Marva--Interviews

African American educators--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

African American school administrators--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Westside Preparatory School (Chicago, Ill.)

Chicago Public Schools

Occupations:

Education Administrator

Teacher

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 Marva Collins, February 2, 2000. 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 Marva Collins, Section A2000_017_001_001, TRT: 0:29:27 ?

Marva Collins describes her warm, close-knit upbringing in Atmore, Alabama, which has given her a perspective on the ailments of 21st century youth. She finds that they are caused by a loss of contact between the generations, a lack of bonding brought on by television, and other diversions. She remembers her childhood with her hard-working grandfather who's pampering instilled a great deal of self-esteem in the young Marva. She also recalls the close relationships between neighbors and how the community came together to discipline children and instill values. Collins also shares her great love of books and reading and how that influenced her life.

African American families--Alabama.

African American grandfathers.

African American neighborhoods--Alabama.

Childhood and youth--Activities--Alabama.

Reading and books.

Video Oral History Interview with Marva Collins, Section A2000_017_001_002, TRT: 0:30:04 ?

Marva Collins opens the segment with how she became a teacher and how that experience shaped her philosophy on teaching. After serving as a substitute teacher for 14 years, Collins decided to strike out on her own, and she opened Westside Preparatory School in 1975. Her revolutionary methodology drew the attention of 60 Minutes and Hollywood. A made-for-television movie, called the Marva Collins Story, aired in 1981 and starred Cicely Tyson and Morgan Freeman. Collins continues to share her teaching methodology and points to its success. She also details how valuable teaching and reaching children are to her. She values relationships with her students far and above accumulating material wealth.

Education, Urban--Illinois--Chicago.

Education--Study and teaching.

Education--Methodology.

Made-for-TV movies.

Teacher-student relationships.

Video Oral History Interview with Marva Collins, Section A2000_017_001_003, TRT: 0:29:57 ?

Marva Collins shares many of her fears and hopes for America's youth of all races and creeds. She worries about the influence of media and the emphasis on acquisition of material belongings. Her solution is to reconnect with children, talk to them, spend time with them and let them know they are loved. Collins also repeats her creed for great achievement and personal happiness. She discusses a recent success story, the rehabilitation of an unloved house in Hilton Head. She draws parallels to the marked improvement in its value and the lavish attention she gave to the property and to the attention given to her students.

Youth--United States.

Teacher-student relationships.

Materialism.

Mass media--social aspects--United States.
Dwellings--Remodeling.