

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lula Cole Dawson

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## 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>	Dawson, Lula Cole, 1931-2004
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Lula Cole Dawson,
<b>Dates:</b>	June 6, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:58:21).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Education consultant and government consultant Lula Cole Dawson (1931 - 2004 ) , wife of ambassador Horace G. Dawson, Jr., was involved in a number of volunteer projects throughout Africa and became honorary chairperson of the Child-to-Child Foundation of Botswana. She later worked as a consultant in the Washington D.C. area until her death in 2004. Dawson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 6, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_123
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Lula Cole Dawson was born on April 15, 1931, in Jonesboro, Louisiana. After graduating from high school, Dawson earned an A.B. degree in sociology and counseling in 1952 from Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She then interned at Andover Newton Seminary in Andover, Massachusetts. In the fall of 1952 she began graduate studies in sociology at Boston University, where she earned her master's degree in 1953.

Dawson began her career in 1954 working as the director of student activities at the student center of Southern University. In 1958, Dawson was hired as an interviewer with the Employment Security Commission in Raleigh, North Carolina, where she worked until 1960. Between 1960 and 1972, Dawson traveled with her husband, diplomat Horace Dawson, and was involved in a number of volunteer projects throughout Africa. She sponsored galas to benefit orphanages and organized a craft shop for young girls in Nigeria. She partnered with Victoria Tolbert, wife of the president of Liberia, to build a hostel for young women and organized a self-help program for mothers of children at Mulago Hospital in Uganda.

Dawson returned to the United States with her husband in 1972, and was hired as a field coordinator by the Tennessee State University Training Coordination Center to help identify and train teachers who had been displaced by the desegregation of Tennessee schools. Two years later, she was hired as a consultant to the D.C. Citizens for Better Public Education, where she focused her efforts on providing better educational opportunities for the disadvantaged. Returning overseas with her husband, Dawson served as chairman of the organizing committee of the Friends of the Cultural Center of the Philippines from 1977 to 1979. After her husband's appointment by President Jimmy Carter as the ambassador to Botswana, Dawson became honorary chairperson of the Child-to-Child Foundation of Botswana and chairperson of the First Lady's Charity Ball in Botswana.

After returning from Africa, Dawson worked as a consultant for the Washington, D.C. Public School System, the Department of Health and Human Services, St. Augustine's College International Studies and Foreign Language Learning program and the State Department's Agency for International Development. She served on the board of the Friends of the Museum of African Art and was presented with the Republic of Botswana Award for Outstanding Public Service. Dawson passed away on January 14, 2004 at the age of 72.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Lula Cole Dawson was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 6, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Education consultant and government consultant Lula Cole Dawson (1931 - 2004 ), wife of ambassador Horace G. Dawson, Jr., was involved in a number of volunteer projects throughout Africa and became honorary chairperson of the Child-to-Child Foundation of Botswana. She later worked as a consultant in the Washington D.C. area until her death in 2004.

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## 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Dawson, Lula Cole, 1931-2004

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Dawson, Lula Cole, 1931-2004--Interviews

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Educational consultants--Interviews

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Government consultants--Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## Occupations:

Civic Leader

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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## 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 Lula Cole Dawson, June 6, 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).

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## 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 Lula Cole Dawson, Section A2003\_123\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:47  
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Lula Cole Dawson was born on April 15, 1931, in Jonesboro, Louisiana. Her mother, Norma D. Marchen Cole, was born in 1904 in Louisiana, the oldest of nine children. Her father, Jerry Cole, worked on the railroad as a young man and then started a large paper mill in Jonesboro. Her great grandmother, Florida Cole was born a slave and lived to be 104. Dawson recalls that Louisiana Governor Huey Long visited their family reunions every few years in order to see Florida Cole. She also remembers her great-grandmother telling ghost stories to the children as she sat on her rocking chair. Dawson loved to read books like “Little Women” and “David Copperfield.” She attended Jonesboro Colored School which was founded by Professor Hawk and combined grade school and high school. The school had limited resources, and the principal paid former students to mark out racist comments in the old books donated by the white schools. Her father also prohibited her from taking public buses in order to shield her from racism.

Educational consultants--Interviews

Government consultants--Interviews

Video Oral History Interview with Lula Cole Dawson, Section A2003\_123\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:55  
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Lula Cole Dawson recalls listening to Joe Louis boxing fights on the radio in 1938. Her father, Jerry Cole, was the first in their neighborhood to get a radio and hundreds of neighbors, including some white people, gathered in their yard to listen. Her father also owned a refrigerator and a car. The family’s economic status was derived from her father’s paper mill company and selling his land to the government for a large profit rather than to white people who were interested. Dawson remembers a night in the late 1930s when the KKK came to their home with torches and shotguns and confronted her parents. Although people thought of her father as stingy, Dawson recalls that he provided generous, anonymous support to many. Dawson attended Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana where she learned proper etiquette and became active in the YWCA. She tells of the uproar that occurred when she brought a white friend to campus and how many white fathers paid for their black children’s education.

Video Oral History Interview with Lula Cole Dawson, Section A2003\_123\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:48  
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Lula Cole Dawson comments on the unspoken but widely known occurrence of white men having secret black families in the South. If the white man was powerful, he could protect his black offspring from legal troubles and provide an education for them. Dawson attended graduate school at Boston University in Boston, Massachusetts where she took remedial courses that Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana did not offer. After deciding that she did not want to become a social worker, Dawson earned her M.A. degree in sociology in 1953. Dawson recalls a Jewish professor who helped her grow personally and academically. She also shares memories of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Doug E. Moore who were attending Boston University Divinity School. Dawson met her husband, HistoryMaker Horace G. Dawson, while at Southern University through her work with the YWCA. After she

dropped out of graduate school to marry, the Dawsons moved to North Carolina.

Video Oral History Interview with Lula Cole Dawson, Section A2003\_123\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:43  
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Lula Cole Dawson recalls meeting Edward R. Murrow who recruited her husband, HistoryMaker Horace G. Dawson, to join the U.S. Foreign Service after reading his dissertation on foreign students' views on the United States. Due to segregation in Durham, North Carolina, the Dawsons could only eat with Murrow at the airport. Dawson remembers that Murrow paid more attention to her son than to the mayor and other bigshots there and that he delayed the plane an hour to continue talking to her husband. Horace G. Dawson accepted the position in 1960 but nearly backed out when they could not find suitable housing near a school in Washington, D.C. due to racial discrimination. In 1961, the Dawsons were assigned to Uganda where she taught the women to cook with western equipment. Dawson describes the Ugandan reaction to the 1963 Birmingham, Alabama church bombing which killed four young girls. She recalls challenging white Americans in Africa and was particularly offended by a comment that a diplomat's wife made about trusting her.

Video Oral History Interview with Lula Cole Dawson, Section A2003\_123\_001\_005, TRT: 0:30:03  
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Lula Cole Dawson describes her experiences and contributions as a foreign diplomat's wife. In each country, Dawson's goal was to leave something behind that improved the country. In Uganda, she organized a YWCA type of program focused on cooking. In Nigeria, she started a United Nations shop where women could sell tablecloths, pillows, and artwork. Dawson describes the political leaders in Africa during the 1960s and Nigeria's attempt to form a cohesive country despite having three distinct tribal groups. While in Liberia, Dawson attended an event with Secretary of State Cecil Dennis who made a funny comment about the country's ragtag army. Later, the president, William Tubman, explained to her why he did not want to send his countrymen abroad for military training. Next, the Dawsons served in the Philippines where she worked with Imelda Marcos, wife of Ferdinand Marcos, to build a cultural center inspired by the Kennedy Center. Dawson shares her memories of Botswanan President Seretse Khama and his wife.

Video Oral History Interview with Lula Cole Dawson, Section A2003\_123\_001\_006, TRT: 0:29:05  
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Lula Cole Dawson describes helping Botswana's First Lady adjust to her role by finding clothing and organizing a successful charity ball. Dawson derives satisfaction in seeing the various programs she started in Africa continue to flourish. Upon returning to the United States, Dawson worked as a consultant and continued to work on charitable endeavors. Dawson talks about trying to understand and not judge the younger generation. She sees her legacy as her family and wants her funeral to be a celebratory one. Dawson concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.