

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Thelma Groomes

Overview of the Collection

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Repository: | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com |
| Creator: | Groomes, Thelma, 1911-2011 |
| Title: | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Thelma Groomes, |
| Dates: | July 17, 2003 |
| Bulk Dates: | 2003 |
| Physical Description: | 6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:40:10). |
| Abstract: | Middle school teacher Thelma Groomes (1911 - 2011) served as the president of the Howard University Women's Board. Groomes was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 17, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| Identification: | A2003_159 |
| Language: | The interview and records are in English. |

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Thelma Lucille Jarmon Vass Groomes was born January 3, 1911, in Kinston, North Carolina. An only child, her father worked as a truck driver and a preacher while her mother was a seamstress and beautician. Groomes grew up in Washington, D.C., graduating from high school in 1928 and going on to attend Howard University, where she earned a B.A. in education in 1932. She would later return to school at the University of the District of Columbia to further her education in the 1960s.

After graduating from Howard, Groomes took a job with the U.S. Department of Commerce, tabulating figures for the next three years. In 1935, she left for the U.S. Department of Labor to work as a statistical clerk, and she would remain there until 1959. That year, she went to work at Hine Junior High School teaching English, reading and social studies. She also taught government and sociology at Roosevelt High School as part of its adult education program. While at Hine, Groomes was an outgoing teacher engaged in her students' progress. She was the sponsor of the United Nations Contest and trip to the United Nations in New York, the sponsor of the Junior Red Cross Society and sponsor of the Charm and Culture Club. She also served as a representative of the school to the city of Washington, D.C., and the National Education Association. Groomes retired in 1972, but spent the next year working as a consultant to Alton Elementary School in the Parent-Partnership Traineeship Program.

Over the years, Groomes has been involved in a wide number of organizations. She has served as the vice president of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History in the Capital chapter, served on the Women's Committee of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and is a charter member and vice president of the D.C. Friends of Liberia. She also currently serves as the president of the Howard University Women's Club, a role that she also filled from 1954 to 1956. She is also a lifelong member of the National Education Association and the NAACP. Groomes has been named the Woman of the Year by *Afro-American*, has been inducted into the Washington Urban League Hall of Fame, and was named One of Washington's Best Dressed Women by the Omega Wives. Groomes has traveled the world and sponsored three overseas orphans. She has two children, two grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Groomes passed away on August 8, 2011 at the age of 100.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Thelma Groomes was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 17, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Middle school teacher Thelma Groomes (1911 - 2011) served as the president of the Howard University Women's Board.

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:

Groomes, Thelma, 1911-2011

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Groomes, Thelma, 1911-2011--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Middle School 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 Thelma Groomes, July 17, 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).

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 Thelma Groomes, Section A2003_159_001_001, TRT: 0:29:55 ?

Thelma Groomes was born on January 3, 1911 in Kinston, North Carolina. Her mother, Cora Becton Jarmon was born in 1889 in Kinston also. She worked as a beautician with the Madam C.J. Walker Manufacturing Company and later as a seamstress. Groomes' maternal grandparents farmed tobacco in Virginia and sold trees to telephone companies. Her maternal grandfather worked also as a

carpenter. Groomes' father, Otis Jarmon, was born in 1889 in Kinston. Otis and Cora Jarmon migrated together to Washington, D.C. after Groomes' birth. Otis Jarmon was ordained as a minister in 1920 and worked at the Kennedy-Warren apartment building, an eleven-story art deco apartment building in Washington D.C., until a near-fatal chemical accident. He was treated at Freedman's Hospital in Washington D.C. and won a settlement in a lawsuit that was argued by George Edward Chalmers Hayes. Groomes describes her childhood in Washington D.C. She attended Bruce-Monroe Elementary School and later, Paul Laurence Dunbar High School.

Video Oral History Interview with Thelma Groomes, Section A2003_159_001_002, TRT: 0:30:30
?

Thelma Groomes talks about researching her maternal family ancestry with HistoryMaker Gen. Julius Becton, Jr. She tells a story about her grandfather's encounter with a bear and describes her uncle, Elias Becton, a veteran of World War I. Groomes' favorite elementary school subjects were English and social studies. She attended Wilson Elementary School and Paul Laurence Dunbar High School, both in Washington, D.C. She graduated high school in 1928, and enrolled at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Dunbar describes her undergraduate professors including E. Franklin Frazier, Charles Harris Wesley, Maryrose Reeves Allen, and historian William Leo Hansberry-she later became good friends with Hansberry's daughter, HistoryMaker Gail Hansberry. Groomes describes her undergraduate experience at Howard, including her membership in the Howard University Women's Club. She talks about Dean Lucy Diggs Slowe's contribution to the club and Mary Church Terrell's inclusion as an honorary member.

Video Oral History Interview with Thelma Groomes, Section A2003_159_001_003, TRT: 0:30:00
?

Thelma Groomes talks about the legacy of activist and suffragist Mary Church Terrell in Washington D.C. Groomes describes her role as a "Friend of the Chapel" at Howard University in Washington D.C. and lists notable Howard University faculty and alumni. She worked in the U.S. government as an undergraduate student in the Department of Commerce, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, and in the statistical unit at the Department of Labor. Groomes earned her B.A. degree in English and social studies in 1959. She was appointed an English and social studies instructor at Hines Junior High School also in 1959. She also became a member of the non-profit organization Friends of Liberia, and was elected president in the early 1970s, shortly before the inauguration of Liberian president William Richard Tolbert in 1971. Groomes talks about her husband, Ogden Groomes' work in Washington D.C. union organizing and as president of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations.

Video Oral History Interview with Thelma Groomes, Section A2003_159_001_004, TRT: 0:29:50
?

Thelma Groomes talks about working with the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH). She met the organization's founder, Dr. Carter Goodwin Woodson, the founder of "Negro History Week". Groomes served as president of the ASALH Washington D.C. chapter in the late 1970s. She remembers the March on Washington in 1963 and the assassination of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968. In 1964, Groomes met activist Fannie Lou Hamer, booked her to speak at a women's professional conference and invited her to stay in her home. Groomes remembers Resurrection City, a tent city erected in Washington D.C. during the Poor

People's Campaign in 1968. Groomes was recognized for her work with the Campaign, and talks about her affiliation with various civic organizations, including the Middle States Council for the Social Studies, PUSH Excel, and others. She also speaks about her parent's involvement in the Universal Negro Improvement Association.

Video Oral History Interview with Thelma Groomes, Section A2003_159_001_005, TRT: 0:30:50
?

Thelma Groomes talks about her retirement from the District of Columbia public school system in 1972 as well as the challenges she faced. She talks about her parent's perception of her career and the significance of oral history. Groomes describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community and narrates her photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Thelma Groomes, Section A2003_159_001_006, TRT: 0:09:05
?

Thelma Groomes narrates her photographs.