

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Elizabeth B. Rawlins

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Rawlins, Elizabeth, 1927-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Elizabeth B. Rawlins,
Dates:	June 22, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:33:09).
Abstract:	Academic administrator, education professor, and elementary school teacher Elizabeth B. Rawlins (1927 -) served as the associate dean of the Human Services Program and a professor of education at Simmons College. Rawlins was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 22, 2005, in Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_146
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Elizabeth B. Rawlins, dean and professor emeritus at Simmons College in Boston, Massachusetts, was recognized for her effective and tireless dedication to numerous educational and community organizations in Boston, across private and public higher education in Massachusetts, over a fifty-year period. Born on November 25, 1927, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Rawlins attended the local public schools and graduated from Cambridge High and Latin School in 1944.

After high school, Rawlins attended Salem State Teachers College, where she earned her B.S. degree in education in 1950; from there she became an elementary school teacher in urban and suburban public schools, and in private schools in Massachusetts. From 1953 to 1954, Rawlins taught at Narimasu Elementary School in Tokyo, Japan. After earning her master's degree in urban education from Simmons College in 1967, Rawlins left elementary school teaching and began working as a lecturer at Simmons, where she was an associate professor by 1976. From 1979 to 1992, Rawlins served as the associate dean of the Human Services Program; she became a professor of education in 1991, the same year that she received her Ed.D. degree from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

For ten years, Rawlins served as chairperson of the Salem State College board of trustees; she also served as a board member of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, and a member of the Simmons College Corporation. Rawlins also served as president of the Massachusetts Association of Mental Health; between 1982 and 1988, she served on the Education Commission of the States.

During her long career at Simmons, Rawlins often addressed racially sensitive issues; the establishment of the Elizabeth B. Rawlins Scholarship Fund at Simmons, and the Salem State College Rawlins Oratorical Contest are testaments to her leadership and contributions to higher education in Massachusetts, and the respect she earned in the process.

After her retirement in 1992, Rawlins served on the advisory council to the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School on the island of Martha's Vineyard, and as the vice president of the Martha's Vineyard branch of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Elizabeth B. Rawlins was conducted by Robert Hayden on June 22, 2005, in Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Academic administrator, education professor, and elementary school teacher Elizabeth B. Rawlins (1927 -) served as the associate dean of the Human Services Program and a professor of education at Simmons College.

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:

Rawlins, Elizabeth, 1927-

Hayden, Robert (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Rawlins, Elizabeth, 1927---Interviews

African American women educators--Interviews

College department heads--Interviews

African American women teachers--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Simmons College

Simmons College

Occupations:

Academic Administrator

Education Professor

Elementary 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 Elizabeth B. Rawlins, June 22, 2005. 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 Elizabeth B. Rawlins, Section A2005_146_001_001, TRT: 0:29:38 ?

Elizabeth B. Rawlins was born on November 25, 1927 in Cambridge, Massachusetts to Nellie Williams Miller and Archibald Miller. She traced her maternal ancestry back to Cato and Zubia Duncett, who lived in Stamford, Connecticut in 1790. Rawlins' maternal great-grandfather joined a colored regiment from Troy, New York during the Civil War and became a minister. Her mother was born in 1894 in Albany, New York, although she grew up in Cambridge. When she passed away, Rawlins and her younger brother were raised by their maternal grandmother, Grace Hawkins Williams, who was also born in Albany and was a secretary for a black insurance company. Rawlins' father was born in the 1890s in Barbados, where his mother and sister taught. When he relocated to Cambridge, he stayed with Rawlins' husband's family. In Cambridge, Rawlins attended Houghton School and Union Baptist Church, one of four black churches in her tight-knit, mixed community. Rawlins describes her two older brothers, older sister, and one younger brother.

African American women educators--Interviews.

College department heads--Interviews.

African American women teachers--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Elizabeth B. Rawlins, Section A2005_146_001_002, TRT: 0:29:16 ?

Elizabeth B. Rawlins' younger brother was raised in a foster home when their elderly grandmother was no longer able to handle his high energy. Due to her mother's illness, Rawlins enrolled early in nursery school. She then attended Houghton School where she participated in athletics and, in the second grade, decided she wanted to teach. During her first term at Cambridge High and Latin School, she was dissuaded from pursuing a teaching career because of her race. After she spoke with her minister, he wrote to the school, and she was transferred to the college-track program. Rawlins' maternal grandmother passed away a few months before Rawlins graduated from high school, in the mid-1940s. Rawlins then worked at Raytheon in Watertown, Massachusetts before attending Salem Teachers College. Since she was ill for part of her first year, Rawlins needed to re-take her courses. Rawlins remembers picnics at Magazine Beach near the Charles River, the smell of hot rolls, and a man collecting rags in her neighborhood.

Video Oral History Interview with Elizabeth B. Rawlins, Section A2005_146_001_003, TRT: 0:30:16 ?

Elizabeth B. Rawlins attended Salem Teachers College in Salem, Massachusetts. Although she struggled financially, she managed to graduate in 1950 and fulfill

her ambition of becoming a teacher. She taught in Springfield, Massachusetts before she was recruited to return to her hometown and integrate Cambridge's Buckingham School faculty in the early 1950s. For one year, she taught U.S. Army dependents at Narimasu, a base in Tokyo, Japan. When she returned to the U.S. in 1954, she married Keith W. Rawlins, Jr., whom she had known since childhood. When they relocated from Lexington to Hingham for his job with the Protestant Social Service Bureau, Rawlins applied to Simmons College's master's program in urban teacher preparation. After completing the program, she served as a lecturer in classroom teaching at Simmons. Rawlins describes the teaching careers of other Boston-area African Americans, including her former teacher, Suzanne Revaleon Green. She also recalls her son's adoption and her daughter's birth.

Video Oral History Interview with Elizabeth B. Rawlins, Section A2005_146_001_004, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Elizabeth B. Rawlins, as director of Simmons College's urban teacher preparation program, created courses that focused on instructing African American and minority students. In 1984, after several years of negotiation, Rawlins replaced Dorothy H. Denniston as associate dean at Simmons College. In that position, Rawlins oversaw the honor board and counseling center, as well as the academic support for foreign and minority students. Governor Michael Dukakis appointed Rawlins to the Massachusetts Board of Regents of Higher Education, where she served for eleven years. As a board member, she facilitated the creation of Salem State College's graduate program in social work and prevented the merger between Roxbury Community College and Bunker Hill Community College. When she retired as dean of Simmons College in 1992, she served on Salem State College's board of trustees for ten years, and chaired the board for three. Rawlins describes Simmons College's involvement in the desegregation of Jamaica Plain High School.

Video Oral History Interview with Elizabeth B. Rawlins, Section A2005_146_001_005, TRT: 0:28:07 ?

Elizabeth B. Rawlins developed the idea for a black alumni symposium at Simmons College in 1989. For its inaugural year, Rawlins invited approximately seventy African American female alumni from the Boston area. Over 160 women turned out for the event, solidifying the symposium as an annual event and calling attention to the accomplishments of Simmons College's African American community. During her tenure as dean of Simmons College, Rawlins interacted with notable African American students, including HistoryMakers Gwen Ifill and Susan Taylor. Rawlins and her husband retired to Martha's Vineyard in 1993, and she served on the board of the Nathan Mayhew Seminars and as a member of the island's chapter of the Association for the Study of African American Life & History. Rawlins reflects upon her life and the importance of sharing one's story, particularly as an African American. She describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community and how she would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Elizabeth B. Rawlins, Section A2005_146_001_006, TRT: 0:06:22 ?

Elizabeth B. Rawlins narrates her photographs.