

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Christine James-Brown

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	James-Brown, Christine, 1952-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Christine James-Brown,
Dates:	April 30, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012
Physical Description:	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:23:16).
Abstract:	Nonprofit chief executive Christine James-Brown (1952 -) served as the president and CEO of the Child Welfare League of America and the United Way International. James-Brown was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 30, 2012, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_086
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Non profit executive Christine James-Brown was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on September 9, 1952 to Eva and Howard James. After graduating from Burlington City High School in Burlington, New Jersey, James-Brown enrolled at Rutgers University. She earned her B.A. degree in cultural anthropology in 1974. She was accepted and attended Brown University with the intent on obtaining her PhD in anthropology but left after one year to marry and move to New York with her husband, a graduate student at Columbia Business School. She then went to work at the New York City Department for the Aging, Special Project on Crime Against the Elderly. She then went to work at the New York City Foundation for Senior Citizens. Two years later, James-Brown was hired by the United Way, serving as a planning consultant before being promoted to the deputy director of administration. James-Brown was promoted to director of allocations and agency relations and director of fund distribution and community problem-solving for the United Way in 1985 and 1988, respectively. In 1994, James-Brown was appointed President and CEO of the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania (UWSEPA). She was appointed President and CEO of United Way International ten years later. In 2007, James-Brown left the United Way to become the president and CEO of the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA).

James-Brown has amassed numerous awards and recognition throughout her career, including the National Council of Negro Women's Mary McLeod Bethune Award, B'nai B'rith's Humanitarian Award and Operation Understanding's Distinguished Community Leadership Award, all in 1999. One year later, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania named her a "Distinguished Daughter of Pennsylvania," which honors women of distinction. She was also the recipient of the Center of Autistic Children Small Miracles Award and the American Society for Public Excellence in Public Service. In 1996, James-Brown received an honorary doctorate from Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Additionally, James-Brown has served as a White House Presidential Panel Moderator under former President George W. Bush. In 2001, she was nominated to serve as a U.S. Olympic Committee Torchbearer. James-Brown also served as a Red Cross volunteer in the African nation of Kenya.

She has served on a number of governing and advisory boards of organizations including the United Way of America National Professional Council, the Fels Fund, The William Penn Foundation, Public Private Ventures, Eagles Youth Partnership, Vanguard Charitable Trusts, Comcast & NBC Universal Joint Diversity Council, Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, The Center for Effective Philanthropy, the International Eisenhower Fellowships Nominating Committee, and the Philadelphia School Board. She has one daughter, a son-in-law and two granddaughters and resides in Alexandria, Virginia.

Christine James-Brown was interviewed by the *The HistoryMakers* on April 30, 2012.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Christine James-Brown was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 30, 2012, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Nonprofit chief executive Christine James-Brown (1952 -) served as the president and CEO of the Child Welfare League of America and the United Way International.

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:

James-Brown, Christine, 1952-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
James-Brown, Christine, 1952- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Child Welfare League of America

Occupations:

Nonprofit Chief Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Christine James-Brown, April 30, 2012. 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 Christine James-Brown, Section A2012_086_001_001, TRT: 1:26:02 ?

Christine James-Brown was born on September 9, 1952 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Eva McCollough James and Howard James. Her paternal great-grandmother, Mary Kraider, was the daughter of a wealthy German family, and was disowned for marrying her African American chauffeur. James-Brown's father was born in Philadelphia to Nellie Kraider James and Charles James, Sr. He attended Temple University, and worked for the U.S. Small Business Administration. James-Brown's maternal grandmother, Alma McCollough, was born in the Carolinas, and briefly attended Howard University in Washington, D.C. before leaving to work as a domestic in Philadelphia. There, James-Brown's mother attended Simon Gratz High School and St. Augustine's Protestant Episcopal Church, where she met James-Brown's father. James-Brown grew up in North Philadelphia. After her mother was diagnosed with lupus, she was raised in part by her maternal aunt and uncle, Gloria McCollough Yip and Ming Yip, who was an immigrant from China.

Video Oral History Interview with Christine James-Brown, Section A2012_086_001_002, TRT: 2:28:54 ?

Christine James-Brown's mother, Eva McCollough James, suffered from a chronic illness for most of her life, and was not diagnosed with lupus until she was an adult. James-Brown was raised in a predominantly African American neighborhood in West Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where she attended Harritty Elementary School, and frequented the local parks. Because her mother was often ill, James-Brown and her brother, Michael James, were often left in the care of their cousins, and intermittently lived with their maternal relatives in North Philadelphia. James-Brown went on to attend William L. Sayre Junior High School, where she was a strong student. She enjoyed reading, and also spent time at the Uptown Theater and the local roller skating rink. Around the time that James-Brown entered high school, her family moved to Edgewater Park in Burlington County, New Jersey. She enrolled at Burlington City High School, where she graduated in 1970.

Video Oral History Interview with Christine James-Brown, Section A2012_086_001_003, TRT: 3:30:01 ?

Christine James-Brown grew up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania during the early 1960s. At the time, gang activity was increasing, and the police aggressively patrolled the city's black neighborhoods. Around the mid-1960s, James-Brown's family moved to Burlington County, New Jersey, where they were the first African American family in the area. They faced discrimination from their neighbors, many of whom displayed racist lawn ornaments in their yards. James-Brown attended the integrated Burlington City High School, where she joined the student council and the newspaper staff. She also participated in a walk out protest following the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Upon graduating in 1970, James-Brown enrolled at Douglass College, a women's college in New Brunswick, New Jersey. While she was there, her mother passed away, and she met her future husband, Donald Brown. In 1974, James-Brown graduated with a bachelor's degree in anthropology, and began a Ph.D. program at Brown University.

Video Oral History Interview with Christine James-Brown, Section A2012_086_001_004, TRT:

4:28:46 ?

Christine James-Brown began a Ph.D. degree in anthropology at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island in 1974. She was the only African American student in the program, and disliked the department's focus on theoretical research. James-Brown left the university in 1977, and joined her husband, Donald Brown, in New York City. There, she worked as a researcher for the New York City Department for the Aging, where she studied crimes against the elderly. In 1979, James-Brown returned to her hometown of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where she joined the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania as a planning consultant. Around this time, her paternal cousin, Frank James Africa, became a member of the black liberation group MOVE, which was founded by his maternal uncle, John Africa. In 1985, the MOVE commune in West Philadelphia was bombed by the Philadelphia Police Department. The attack resulted in the destruction of several residential blocks and the deaths of eleven people, including James-Brown's cousin.

Video Oral History Interview with Christine James-Brown, Section A2012_086_001_005, TRT: 5:28:42 ?

Christine James-Brown's cousin, Frank James Africa, belonged to the black liberation group MOVE. He was killed in 1985, when the MOVE commune was bombed by the Philadelphia Police Department. At this time, James-Brown was the director of allocation and agency relations at the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, a nonprofit organization that provided funds and support to the survivors of the bombing. In 1994, James-Brown became the first African American woman to serve as the CEO of United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania. She initially faced opposition from the city's Catholic community because of her progressive political views, but eventually developed a positive relationship with them. James-Brown also participated in the Million Woman March in 1997, contributed to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and served on the Board of Education for the School District of Philadelphia. She left the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania in 2004.

Video Oral History Interview with Christine James-Brown, Section A2012_086_001_006, TRT: 6:30:25 ?

Christine James-Brown travelled to the villages surrounding Nairobi, Kenya as a volunteer with the American Red Cross in 2002. While there, she helped to establish temporary clinics to administer measles vaccines to the local children. In 2004, James-Brown left her position at the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania to become the CEO of United Way International, which acted as a consulting group to assist in the establishment of United Way organizations across the globe. In 2007, she became the president and CEO of the Child Welfare League of America, which was a coalition of child service agencies. Based in Washington, D.C., James-Brown worked to influence child welfare legislation in the United States. She talks about the neglect of children in the welfare and juvenile justice systems, and the importance of prevention programs to divert children from the system. James-Brown also describes the lack of funding for the Child Welfare League of America, and her plans for the organization's future.

Video Oral History Interview with Christine James-Brown, Section A2012_086_001_007, TRT: 7:30:26 ?

Christine James-Brown was the CEO of the Child Welfare League of America. In this role, she travelled internationally to places like Cape Town, South African and Bogota, Colombia to learn about their child welfare systems. At this point in the interview, James-Brown talks about her daughter, Arica Brown

Booker, who attended Spelman College and then settled in New Haven, Connecticut, where she raised two children, Cayden Booker and Kylie Booker, with her husband, Ulish Booker. James-Brown describes her plans for the future, and her hopes and concerns for the African American community. She also reflects upon her life, legacy and how she would like to be remembered. James-Brown concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.