

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Ann Claire Williams

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Williams, Ann Claire, 1949-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Ann Claire Williams,
Dates:	June 20, 2000
Bulk Dates:	2000
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:35:04).
Abstract:	Federal judge The Honorable Ann Claire Williams (1949 -) was the first African American appointed to serve on any federal appeals court. Williams was appointed by President Bill Clinton in 1999. Previously, Williams was appointed by President Ronald Reagan to the Federal District Court in Illinois in 1985. Williams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 20, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2000_042
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Judge Ann Williams was born in Detroit on August 16, 1949, the oldest of three daughters born to Dorothy and Joshua Williams. Williams graduated from Wayne State University in 1970 with a degree in elementary education and then got a masters degree from the University of Michigan in guidance and counseling. She then taught third grade in Detroit until she went to the University of Notre Dame, where she received her law degree in 1976.

Williams began her legal career as a law clerk with Judge Robert Sprecher of the U.S. Court of Appeals. This beginning served her well for the career that awaited her. She worked as an assistant U.S. attorney in Chicago from 1976 to 1985, trying major felony cases. Then in 1985, President Ronald Reagan appointed her as the first African American woman on the Federal District Court in Illinois and only the ninth African American woman ever appointed to Federal District Court.

In August 1999, Williams was nominated to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit by President Bill Clinton. She was confirmed on November 10, 1999, becoming the first African American ever appointed and the third African American woman to serve on any federal appeals court.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Ann Claire Williams was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on June 20, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Federal judge The Honorable Ann Claire Williams (1949 -) was the first African American appointed to serve on any federal appeals court. Williams was appointed by President Bill Clinton in 1999. Previously, Williams was appointed by President Ronald Reagan to the Federal District Court in Illinois in 1985.

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:

Williams, Ann Claire, 1949-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hayes, Frank (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Williams, Ann Claire, 1949---Interviews

African American women judges--Interviews

African American women lawyers--Interviews

Detroit (Mich.)--Social conditions

Discrimination in employment--Michigan--Detroit

University of Notre Dame. Law School

Substitute teachers--Michigan--Detroit--Interviews

Sprecher, Robert A.

United States. Circuit Court (7th Circuit)

Clinton, Bill, 1946-

Reagan, Ronald

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States. Court of Appeals (7th Circuit)

Occupations:

Federal Judge

HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers

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 The Honorable Ann Claire Williams, June 20, 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 2/5/2020 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 The Honorable Ann Claire Williams,
Section A2000_042_001_001, TRT: 0:31:06 2000/06/20

Ann Williams shares her parents background and how they met. Williams also discusses the difficulties her parents faced trying to find good paying jobs in a racist and segregated Detroit in the 1930s and 1940s. Her father, who held a college degree, could only find a job as a bus driver. Her mother could not serve as a full-time teacher due to race. Williams also talks about how important spending the holidays with her parents in Detroit is for her and her family.

African American women judges--Interviews.

African American women lawyers--Interviews.

Detroit (Mich.)--Social conditions.

Discrimination in employment--Michigan--Detroit.

University of Notre Dame. Law School.

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Sprecher, Robert A.

United States. Circuit Court (7th Circuit).

Clinton, Bill, 1946-.

Reagan, Ronald.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Ann Claire Williams,
Section A2000_042_001_002, TRT: 0:33:25 2000/06/20

Ann Williams shares her youthful hopes and dreams of teaching. She also talks about her deep passion for music and secret desire to become a singer. But after substitute teaching for several years and discovering she was no longer interested in elementary education, Williams decided to apply to law school on a whim, and was accepted.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Ann Claire Williams,
Section A2000_042_001_003, TRT: 0:31:03 2000/06/20

Ann Williams remembers her years at the University of Notre Dame Law School, which were full of challenges for a young black woman in the early 1970s. She recalls those years fondly and shares several anecdotes of how she jumped head first into the program. Her trajectory for success began in earnest after she landed a clerkship in the 7th Circuit District Court in 1975. Her mentors, Justice Swygert and Sprecher helped guide her career. After serving as clerk, she applied for a position as a U.S. Attorney, where she served for the next ten years defending and prosecuting cases for the federal government. Williams worked in several practice areas, rising in responsibility along the way. Serving in the Washington D.C. office helped focus attention of higher-ups on her rising star.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Ann Claire Williams,
Section A2000_042_001_004, TRT: 0:30:03 2000/06/20

This segment centers on Williams' nomination and appointment to the 7th Circuit District Court in 1984 by then President Ronald Reagan. She was the first black woman nominated to serve on the 7th circuit and the youngest, just age 35 and only 10 years out of law school. She relates a funny story of going into labor while

simultaneously trying to complete her paperwork for her judicial nomination. Williams also shares the many joys of serving on the bench, like interacting with the jurors or hearing a great cross-examination. The segment closes with her nomination and confirmation to the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals during the Clinton Administration.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Ann Claire Williams,
Section A2000_042_001_005, TRT: 0:29:27 2000/06/20

Ann Williams, at the time of this interview in 2000, had been on the appellate court for just six months. She shares her initial impressions of the difference between the district and appellate courts in terms of procedures and subject matter jurisdiction. She also speaks extensively of those who've mentored her by deed and action. She shares her thoughts on what she wants her legacy to be as well as her hopes for black youth.