

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Marian Wright Edelman

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Edelman, Marian Wright
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Marian Wright Edelman,
Dates:	April 24, 2001
Bulk Dates:	2001
Physical Description:	3 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:28:57).
Abstract:	Foundation chief executive Marian Wright Edelman (1939 -) was the founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund where she worked to decrease teenage pregnancy, increase Medicaid coverage for poor children and secure government funding for programs such as Head Start. Edelman was also the first African American female to have been on the board of directors of Yale University. Edelman was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 24, 2001, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2001_030
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Marian Wright Edelman, founder and President of the Children's Defense Fund, was born on June 6, 1939, in Bennettsville, South Carolina. Edelman was the youngest of five children and credits her father with instilling in her an obligation to right wrongs. When African Americans in Bennettsville were not allowed to enter city parks, Arthur Wright, her father, built a park for African American children behind his church.

Edelman is a graduate of Spelman College and Yale Law School. While working as director of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund office in Jackson, Mississippi, she became the first African American female admitted to the Mississippi State Bar. She also became nationally recognized as an advocate for Head Start at this time. In 1968, Edelman moved to Washington, D.C., and subsequently became counsel to the Poor People's Campaign that was organized by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. She founded the Washington Research Project (WRP), where she focused on lobbying Congress for child and family nutrition programs and expanding the Head Start program. In 1973, the Washington Research Project became the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), the United States' leading advocacy group for children. As president of the CDF, Edelman has worked to decrease teenage pregnancy, increase Medicaid coverage for poor children, and secure government funding for programs such as Head Start.

Edelman has served as the Director of the Center for Law and Education at Harvard University and is the first African American female to have been on the board of directors of Yale University. Edelman has written many articles and books, including the autobiographical New York Times best-seller, *The Measure of Our Success: A Letter to My Children and Yours*. Edelman's awards include the Albert Schweitzer Humanitarian Prize, the Heinz Award, the Ella J. Baker Prize and the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Marian Wright Edelman was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on April 24, 2001, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 3 Betacame SP videocassettes. Foundation chief executive Marian Wright Edelman (1939 -) was the founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund where she worked to decrease teenage pregnancy, increase Medicaid coverage for poor children and secure government funding for programs such as Head Start. Edelman was also the first African American female to have been on the board of directors of Yale University.

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:

Edelman, Marian Wright

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Bieschke, Paul (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Edelman, Marian Wright--Interviews

African American women executives--Washington (D.C.)--Interviews.

African American women educators--Washington (D.C.)--Interviews.

Children's Defense Fund (U.S.).

Genealogy.

Bennettsville (S.C.)--Social life and customs--20th century.

Baptists--United States--South Carolina.

African American families--South Carolina.

Spelman College--History--20th century.

African American college students--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews.

Civil rights movements--United States.

African American women civil rights workers--Interviews.

Zinn, Howard, 1922-2010.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Children's Defense Fund (U.S.)

Occupations:

Foundation 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 Marian Wright Edelman, April 24, 2001. 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 Marian Wright Edelman, Section A2001_030_001_001, TRT: 0:30:34 ?

Marian Wright Edelman recalls her father and the extended family members that lived in Bennettsville, South Carolina. She then discusses the origins of her family as told to her by her father. Edelman talks about her mother's family and the time she met her great-grandmother. Next Edelman details her parents' courtship from the genealogical research she gathered. She then describes her hometown of Bennettsville, South Carolina. Marian Wright Edelman then recalls her parents' attitudes towards church, family and education. Edelman then recalls the unique sense of independence women had in her family. Later Edelman gives her impressions of her father and the values her parents instilled in her. Marian Wright Edelman talks about the Baptist Church community of her youth and what it means to her today. Lastly Edelman recalls her personality as a child.

African American women executives--Washington (D.C.)--Interviews.

African American women educators--Washington (D.C.)--Interviews.

Children's Defense Fund (U.S.).

Genealogy.

Bennettsville (S.C.)--Social life and customs--20th century.

Baptists--South Carolina.

African American families--South Carolina.

Spelman College--History--20th century.

African American college students--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews.

Civil rights movements--United States.

African American women civil rights workers--Interviews.

Zinn, Howard, 1922-2010.

Video Oral History Interview with Marian Wright Edelman, Section A2001_030_001_002, TRT: 0:31:05 ?

Marian Wright Edelman details her father's death and her mother's desire for her to attend college closer to home. She then reflects on the difficult transition she experienced in her first year at Spelman College. Next Edelman talks about her Spelman experience in the 1950s at the start of the civil rights movement. Edelman details how she was able to study abroad on a scholarship after being nominated by Howard Zinn, the Chair of the History Department. Edelman details her experience at Yale University Law School and her career decision to work on civil rights issues in Mississippi. Edelman reflects on the obstacles she faced in order to pass the bar exam in Mississippi and her decision to move to Washington, D.C. to work on civil rights on a national level. Marian Wright Edelman discusses the founding of the Children's Defense Fund and its accomplishments. Lastly, Edelman talks about her legacy.

Video Oral History Interview with Marian Wright Edelman, Section A2001_030_001_003, TRT: 0:27:18 ?

Marian Wright Edelman's office assistant at the Children's Defense Fund describes the thirty-eight photographs Ms. Edelman provided for her interview; these photographs, from the 1940s-1990s, include images from her childhood and youth, her work in civil rights and children's rights, and other photos of family, friends and colleagues.