Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com

Creator: Waters, Maxine

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Maxine Waters,

Dates: July 29, 2001

Bulk Dates: 2001

Physical Description: 5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:16:07).

Abstract: U.S. congresswoman The Honorable Maxine Waters (1938 - ) was an outspoken advocate for the rights of women, children, poor people and people of color. Waters was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 29, 2001, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

Identification: A2001_076

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Congresswoman Maxine Waters is considered by many to be one of the most powerful women in politics today. Her work has earned her the reputation of being an outspoken advocate for women, children, people of color and poor people.

Born on August 15, 1938, in St. Louis, Missouri, to Remus Moore and Velma Lee Carr Moore, Waters was one of thirteen children. In 1961, she moved to Los Angeles, California, where she found work in a garment factory and as a telephone operator. In 1966, Waters was hired as an assistant teacher with the newly formed Head Start program in Watts. Waters decided to attend college
while working at Head Start, and in 1970 earned a sociology degree from California State University in Los Angeles.

Waters became the voice for frustrated Head Start parents. Her efforts encouraged these parents to make federal budget requests, to contact legislators and agencies for increased funding, and to lobby for Head Start components tailored to their community. Waters' concern for parents' rights led her to become involved in local politics and in 1973, she went to work as chief deputy to city council member David Cunningham.

In 1976, Waters quit her job and successfully ran for election to the California State Assembly. During her tenure in the State Assembly, Waters authored numerous pieces of legislation including: a law requiring state agencies to award a percentage of public contracts to minorities and women; tenants' rights laws; a law restricting police efforts to use strip searches; and the largest divestment of state pension funds from businesses involved in South Africa.

After serving for fourteen years in the California State Assembly, in 1990, Waters successfully ran for a seat in the 29th Congressional District of California. In 1992, Waters ran in the much larger 35th District, representing South Central Los Angeles, Inglewood, Gardena, and Hawthorne, and won eighty-three percent of the votes. Waters continues to represent the 35th District and has been active on a number of issues including affirmative action, community development, women's health and welfare reform. Waters focused attention on the plight of inner city communities as well as the allegations of CIA involvement in Contra cocaine drug trafficking in South Central Los Angeles in the mid-1980s.

Waters lives in Los Angeles and is married to Sidney Williams, former U.S. Ambassador to the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. They have two adult children, Karen and Edward.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Maxine Waters was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on July 29, 2001, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 5 Betacam SP videocassettes. U.S. congresswoman The Honorable Maxine Waters (1938 - ) was an outspoken advocate for the rights of women, children, poor people and people of color.
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:

Waters, Maxine

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
United States. Central Intelligence Agency

Public housing--California--Los Angeles

Clinton, Bill, 1946---Impeachment

Congressional Black Caucus

Stokes, Louis, 1925-

Clay, William L.

**Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

California

**Occupations:**

U.S. Congresswoman

**HistoryMakers® Category:**

PoliticalMakers

**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**


**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 Maxine Waters, Section A2001_076_001_001, TRT: 0:31:40 2001/07/29

Maxine Waters describes growing up in St. Louis; she talks fondly of her neighborhood and her roots in the African American community. She talks about her early education, including the subjects that most interested her and the teachers who inspired her. Waters also briefly discusses her religious affiliation and her family background.

African American women legislators--California--Interviews.
African American women politicians--California--Interviews.
Maxine Waters talks about her early adulthood, from her high school years in St. Louis, Missouri, to her relocation to Colorado and then California. She focuses in particular on her career, starting out as a garment worker and waitress, and eventually working her way through Head Start to manage political campaigns. She talks at length about the positive influence of Head Start on herself and the community. Waters also discusses motherhood and her decision to seek higher education.

Maxine Waters details her early involvement in and exposure to political campaigns. Working on various local,
state and national campaigns, Waters learned the ins and outs of what it takes to be a successful politician. As a successful grassroots political activist, Waters makes the leap to the California State Assembly. She shrewdly aligns herself with ideological soul mates at the state and national level. Waters also maintains a strong base in her district, working with her constituents in the projects or single-family homes. Waters faces initial friction to her strong feminist ideals, but she finds a supporter in California Speaker of the House, Willie Brown. As Congressman Gus Hawkins was about to be redistricted, Waters helped prevent that gerrymander, and when Hawkins decided to retire, Waters knew the seat was hers.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Maxine Waters, Section A2001_076_001_004, TRT: 0:29:00 2001/07/29

Maxine Waters details how the Los Angeles riots of 1992 set the tone for her first few years in Congress. She describes the resistance she encountered in the U.S. House of Representatives to her support of the growing evidence that the CIA was involved in the drug trade in the black community. Waters also shares her thoughts on the deterioration of the quality of black life in housing projects, especially because of drug abuse.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Maxine Waters, Section A2001_076_001_005, TRT: 0:17:18 2001/07/29

Maxine Waters reflects on the last five years of her time in the U.S. House of Representatives. She is still profoundly shocked and dismayed by the Republican-led impeachment against President Bill Clinton in 1999 and the implications for the future governing of the United States. Waters then details the goals and successes of the Congressional Black Caucus. She notes the inspiration of Louis Stokes and William Clay in the founding of the Congressional Black Caucus. Waters wishes she could spend more time with her family, but the demands of her job don't allow that. When contemplating her legacy, Waters wants to be remembered as a person who paid attention to injustice and inequality. Finally, she shares some photographs from her personal collection.