

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Barbara Bowman

---

## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Bowman, Barbara T
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Bowman,
<b>Dates:</b>	May 20, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:04:31).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Education chief executive Barbara Bowman (1928 - ) is the Director of Chicago's Erikson Institute. Bowman was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 20, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_068
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Early education expert and advocate Barbara Bowman was born on October 30, 1928 in Chicago, Illinois. She earned her B.A. from Sarah Lawrence in 1950 and went on to receive her M.A. from the University of Chicago in 1952.

For many years, Bowman taught at both the preschool and elementary levels, but in 1966 she acted as one of the three founders of the Erikson Institute For Advanced Study in Child Development, where she pioneered the teaching of early childhood education and administration. She has become a sought after expert and she tirelessly pursues higher quality and more extensive training for early education practitioners. Taking her expertise abroad, she has consulted with

universities in China and Iran. In addition, she has directed training programs for Head Start teachers, teachers in inner-city schools, caregivers of at-risk infants and for a Child Development Associate's program on Native American Reservations.

Bowman continues to act as the President of the Erikson Institute and of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. She has served on the boards of the Great Books Foundation, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, Roosevelt University and the Family Resource Coalition. She is the Chair of the Committee of Early Childhood Pedagogy for the National Research Council, for which she served as a member of their Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children. She and her husband, Dr. James Bowman, are the parents of one daughter, Valerie Jarrett and the grandparents of Laura Jarrett.

---

## **Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Barbara Bowman was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on May 20, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Education chief executive Barbara Bowman (1928 - ) is the Director of Chicago's Erikson Institute.

---

## **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:**

Bowman, Barbara T

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews  
Bowman, Barbara T--Interviews

---

### **Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

### **Occupations:**

Education Chief Executive

---

### **HistoryMakers® Category:**

## **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 Barbara Bowman, May 20, 2002. 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 Barbara Bowman, Section  
A2002\_068\_001\_001, TRT: 0:31:02 2002/05/20

Dr. Barbara Bowman was born in 1928 in Chicago,

Illinois to Dorothy Jennings Taylor and Robert Rochon Taylor. Her mother was born in Louisville, Kentucky, and was raised in Chicago by her mother, who was active in community organizations such as the Provident Hospital Women's Board. Bowman's father was born in 1900 in Tuskegee, Alabama. His father was Robert Robinson Taylor, who was the first black student to obtain a degree in architecture from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1888. He went on to develop Tuskegee University, with Booker T. Washington, serving as its vice president from 1925 until 1945. Robert Rochon Taylor became the first black chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority in 1939, and was an activist in African American housing reform. He fought the racial segregation of Chicago in the 1930s and 1940s. Bowman grew up with her family in the Rosenwald Apartments in Chicago, the complex her father helped develop with Sears and Roebuck owner Julius Rosenwald in 1930.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Bowman, Section  
A2002\_068\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:53 2002/05/20

Dr. Barbara Bowman describes how members of her maternal family several generations back passed as white, though she and her family always considered themselves black. She and her sister, HistoryMaker Laurantita Dugas, grew up in the Rosenwald Apartments in Chicago, Illinois. They were developed by her father, Robert Rochon Taylor in 1930, working with Sears and Roebuck founder Julius Rosenwald. There, Bowman attended Mrs. Oneida Cockrell's Nursery School. Bowman describes Oneida Cockrell as a mentor for her life's work, early childhood education. She describes the atmosphere of the black community at Rosenwald during World War II. Bowman and Dugas attended mostly white schools, including Chicago's Parker High School, and the boarding school, Northfield Mount Hermon Preparatory School, located in Massachusetts. A shy and artistic child, Bowman was an art major at Sarah Lawrence College, before graduating with a degree in early childhood education in 1950, following the advice of Mrs. Cockrell.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Bowman, Section  
A2002\_068\_001\_003, TRT: 0:31:23 2002/05/20

Dr. Barbara Bowman grew up in the Rosenwald Apartments, a black housing complex in Chicago, Illinois developed by her father, Robert Rochon Taylor. He was the general manager of the Liberty Life Insurance Company in 1928, and the first African American chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority. Bowman left Chicago to attend boarding school at Northfield Mount Hermon Preparatory School in Massachusetts during high school, one of the few black students there. She went on to graduate from Sarah Lawrence College in 1950, after switching her major to early childhood education. During college, she met HistoryMaker Dr. James Bowman, a Chicago medical school graduate, who she married after graduation. In 1952, Bowman obtained a Master's degree in early childhood education from the University of Chicago, where she met future co-founders of the Erikson Institute, Maria Piers and Lorraine Wallach. She describes how early childhood education changed and developed in the twentieth century.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Bowman, Section A2002\_068\_001\_004, TRT: 0:31:02 2002/05/20

Dr. Barbara Bowman and her husband, HistoryMaker Dr. James Bowman, left Chicago, Illinois to live abroad during the 1950s, in Iran, Nigeria, and England. Her husband was drafted to serve in the U.S. Army, so he volunteered for a position in Shiraz, Iran. While living there, Bowman lectured at Nemazee Hospital, and in 1957, she gave birth to their daughter, HistoryMaker Valerie Jarrett. Bowman experienced different treatment as a black woman than when living in Chicago. She enjoyed raising her daughter outside of the segregated United States, but was ready to return home by the time her daughter Valerie Jarrett entered school. Returning to Chicago in 1962, Bowman noticed the changes that had happened in the United States. She soon became involved with the Head Start program of 1965, to ready young children for school. Traveling across the United States, she noticed how blacks were treated differently than what she experienced during her middle class childhood in Chicago, Illinois.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Bowman, Section

A2002\_068\_001\_005, TRT: 0:30:42 2002/05/20

Dr. Barbara Bowman co-founded the Chicago School for Early Childhood Education, now the Erikson Institute, in 1966 with Maria Piers and Lorraine Wallach, aided by the financial backing of philanthropist Irving B. Harris. The Erikson Institute focused on the interface between education and culture, producing research studies and implementing teaching programs that had a three tiered approach of education, psychology, and childhood development. Bowman helped develop the Erikson Institute into a major early childhood education institution. Starting off as an independent organization, the Institute affiliated with Loyola University Chicago in 1967 to offer a Master's degree to its graduates. Renamed in 1969 as the Erikson Institute, it became accredited in 2000.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Bowman, Section  
A2002\_068\_001\_006, TRT: 0:30:29 2002/05/20

Dr. Barbara Bowman became the president of the Erikson Institute in 1994, holding the position until 2001. She led the Institute to become a leader in researching the role and purpose of technology in early childhood development and education. Bowman's work at the Erikson Institute changed how early childhood education used technology to teach young children. During her tenure as president, she developed an ability to fundraise while she helped to develop and grow the Board of Directors at the Erikson Institute. As president, Bowman grew the Institute, especially developing the technology department. Bowman then describes the changing African American community, and how her father, Robert Rochon Taylor, would have opposed the housing projects named after him in 1962, Chicago's Robert Taylor Homes. She highlights the importance of a sense of community for a person's identity, especially as it relates to childhood development.