

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Iola McGowan

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## 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>	McGowan, Iola, 1936-2012
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Iola McGowan,
<b>Dates:</b>	July 11, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:05:13).
<b>Abstract:</b>	City government appointee and political party executive Iola McGowan (1936 - 2012 ) was a former board member of the Chicago Park District and was the former vice president of the Illinois Democratic Party. McGowan started at the precinct level of local government ascending up the ranks of the Democratic Party to become the director of Consumer Services for the City of Chicago under Mayor Jane Byrne. McGowan was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 11, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_105
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Iola McGowan, former vice chairman of the Illinois State Democratic Party and Chicago Park District Commissioner, was born Iola Stewart on September 8, 1936, in Chicago, Illinois. Proud of her West Side roots, McGowan graduated from Farragut High School in 1954. In the years following graduation, McGowan started a family and began to spearhead neighborhood efforts in her area. Inspired

by another black woman, the late head of Midwest Community Council, Nancy Jefferson, McGowan became more involved in public life. Although a conscientious wife and mother, a determined McGowan did not let family life stop her from pursuing her education. She earned her B.A. degree in inner city studies from Northeastern Illinois University in 1980.

McGowan started at the precinct level of local government ascending up the ranks of the Democratic Party to become the director of Consumer Services for the City of Chicago under Mayor Jane Byrne. McGowan served in that capacity for a six-year term, managing a budget of \$900,000. As director of Consumer Services, she headed the Model Cities Community Services program and successfully funded proposals totaling approximately \$1 million. In addition, she developed an innovative classroom coloring-book aimed at teaching children how to buy food. The Federal Food Program adopted McGowan's book. McGowan served as commissioner and vice president of the Chicago Park District and vice chairman of the Illinois State Democratic Party.

She is a member of the National Organization of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs, the Chicago Council on Fine Arts City Arts Panel and Community Development Program for the Austin Area and the Chicago Chapter of the Coalition of Labor Union Women. McGowan is still a valued consultant and activist in the Austin community.

Iola McGowan passed away on May 25, 2012.

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## **Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Iola McGowan was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 11, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. City government appointee and political party executive Iola McGowan (1936 - 2012 ) was a former board member of the Chicago Park District and was the former vice president of the Illinois Democratic Party. McGowan started at the precinct level of local government ascending up the ranks of the Democratic Party to become the director of Consumer Services for the City of Chicago under Mayor Jane Byrne.

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## **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®.

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## **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.

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## **Controlled Access Terms**

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### **Persons:**

McGowan, Iola, 1936-2012

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews

McGowan, Iola, 1936-2012--Interviews

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## **Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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Chicago Park District (Ill.)

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Democratic Party (Ill.)

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## **Occupations:**

City Government Appointee

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Political Party Executive

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

PoliticalMakers|CivicMakers

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## **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 Iola McGowan, July 11, 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Iola McGowan, Section  
A2002\_105\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:40 2002/07/11

Civil servant Iola McGowan discusses family--including stories of her ancestors and details of changes in her family life. McGowan expresses a fondness for her childhood environs on the West Side of Chicago, Illinois. She then recalls her school years and describes her early occupational interests.

Video Oral History Interview with Iola McGowan, Section  
A2002\_105\_001\_002, TRT: 0:31:13 2002/07/11

Civil servant Iola McGowan discusses her experiences as a student at Northeastern Illinois University. McGowan discusses her beginnings in civic organizing and Chicago, Illinois politics. She details her political involvement around the death of Mayor Richard J. Daley, 1976. McGowan begins to discuss her appointment as Vice President of the Chicago Park District.

Video Oral History Interview with Iola McGowan, Section  
A2002\_105\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:09 2002/07/11

Civil servant Iola McGowan continues to discuss her tenure with the Chicago Park District. McGowan discusses Chicago mayoral politics in 1983 and concomitant tensions in Chicago's black communities.

McGowan discusses her own political campaign for alderwoman in 1983 and again in 1987, as well as her appointment to the Illinois State Central Committee. She considers the problems facing Chicago's predominantly black West Side community. And she discusses her own plans for the future.

Video Oral History Interview with Iola McGowan, Section  
A2002\_105\_001\_004, TRT: 0:31:11 2002/07/11

Civil servant Iola McGowan shares her concerns for the black community. McGowan considers her legacy and how she would like to be remembered. She also discusses her parents' responses to her long career in Chicago, Illinois politics. McGowan details her heart ailment and the altered lifestyle that followed. Iola McGowan presents photographs and other media of highlights in her educational and political careers.

Video Oral History Interview with Iola McGowan, Section  
A2002\_105\_001\_005, TRT: 0:03:00 2002/07/11

Civil servant Iola McGowan presents photographs of family life and highlights in her political career.