

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Carlotta Walls LaNier

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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>	LaNier, Carlotta Walls, 1942-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Carlotta Walls LaNier,
<b>Dates:</b>	July 8, 2002 and June 21, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:01:39).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Civil rights leader Carlotta Walls LaNier (1942 - ) was part of the historic Little Rock Nine. LaNier was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 8, 2002 and June 21, 2002, in Denver, Colorado. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_117
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

The oldest of three daughters, Carlotta LaNier was born on December 18, 1942 in Little Rock, Arkansas to Juanita and Cartelyou Walls. LaNier (then Walls) made history as the youngest member of the Little Rock Nine, those nine courageous African American students who integrated Little Rock Central High School in 1957. The world watched as these children and their families braved constant intimidation and threats. This defiant act followed the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Brown vs. Board of Education*.

Inspired by Rosa Parks and the desire to get the best education available, LaNier enrolled in Central High School. White students called her names and spat on her

and armed guards escorted her to classes, but LaNier concentrated on her studies and protected herself throughout the school year. Governor Orval Faubus stopped the public schools from opening in September of 1958, and after a year of closure and controversy, the schools re-opened in 1959. LaNier returned to Central High, graduating in 1960.

LaNier attended Michigan State University for two years before moving with her family to Denver, Colorado. In 1968, she earned a B.S. from Colorado State College (now the University of Northern Colorado) and began working at the YWCA as a program administrator for teens. In 1977, she founded LaNier and Company, a real estate brokerage company. Her experience in real estate extends from constructing and remodeling properties to marketing and selling them. Cherry Creek Realtors hired her in 1987.

LaNier was awarded the prestigious Spingarn Medal by the NAACP in 1958. She has been a member of the Colorado Aids Project, Jack and Jill of America, the Urban League and the NAACP and the president of the Little Rock Nine Foundation, a scholarship organization dedicated to ensuring equal access to education for African Americans. She has also served as a trustee for the Iliff School of Theology. In 1999, President Clinton bestowed the nation's highest civilian award, the Congressional Gold Medal, to the members of the Little Rock Nine. In 2009, LaNier completed her book, *A Mighty Long Way*, a biography with forward by Bill Clinton. LaNier and her husband, Ira (Ike) LaNier, have two children, Whitney and Brooke.

LaNier was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on June 21, 2002.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Carlotta Walls LaNier was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 8, 2002 and June 21, 2002, in Denver, Colorado, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civil rights leader Carlotta Walls LaNier (1942 - ) was part of the historic Little Rock Nine.

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## Restrictions

### Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The

## 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:

LaNier, Carlotta Walls, 1942-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

LaNier, Carlotta Walls, 1942---Interviews

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## Organizations:

## **Occupations:**

Civil Rights Leader

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

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 Carlotta Walls LaNier, July 8, 2002 and June 21, 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 Carlotta Walls LaNier, Section A2002\_117\_001\_001, TRT: 0:31:06 2002/06/21

Carlotta Walls LaNier narrates her photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Carlotta Walls LaNier, Section A2002\_117\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:28 2002/06/21

Carlotta Walls LaNier narrates her photographs and talks about her family background. LaNier was born on December 18, 1942 to Juanita Cullins Walls and Cartelyou Walls in Little Rock, Arkansas. Lanier's maternal grandfather, Med Cullins, was a contractor who built schools and churches throughout Arkansas and taught her father about the construction business. Her maternal grandmother's family, the Holloways, migrated from Georgia to Arkansas. The Walls family held reunions for over ninety years and founded the Walls Freeman Museum in Canada. LaNier's father was a brick mason and her mother was a homemaker. LaNier played with white children in her neighborhood during the summer, but she knew not to acknowledge them in segregated downtown Little Rock, Arkansas during the 1940s. As a child, LaNier was a responsible student who liked to play sports and watch baseball.

Video Oral History Interview with Carlotta Walls LaNier, Section A2002\_117\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:20 2002/06/21

Carlotta Walls LaNier describes her childhood in Little Rock, Arkansas. LaNier experienced name-calling due to her light skin which readied her for the taunts that she experienced as part of the Little Rock Nine. LaNier's grandfather, Med Cullins, built the Wesley Chapel Church at Philander Smith College in Little Rock, Arkansas, and he owned a restaurant and pool hall. She remembers her

maternal grandfather's colorful language and traveling to Walls family reunions with her paternal grandfather. LaNier met Thelonious Monk and Malcolm X as a child, although she did not realize who they were until later in life. LaNier attributes her preparation for becoming part of the Little Rock Nine to her sense that she was equal to others and what she learned at her segregated schools.

Video Oral History Interview with Carlotta Walls LaNier, Section A2002\_117\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:15 2002/06/21

Carlotta Walls LaNier describes becoming part of the Little Rock Nine and her first day at Little Rock Central High School. As a result of the Supreme Court ruling, *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954, the Little Rock, Arkansas school board made a plan to integrate public schools. In April 1957, along with over a hundred other eligible students, LaNier signed up to attend Little Rock Central High School. Over the summer, the number of interested students dwindled due to families' fears of repercussions and students' reluctance to attend a high school where they were banned from extracurricular participation. LaNier believed that it was her right to attend the school and that television reports of opposition were exaggerated. On the first day of school, the Arkansas National Guard blocked their entrance to the school, and the Little Rock Nine remained at home for three weeks while the NAACP, under the leadership of Daisy Bates, battled in court.

Video Oral History Interview with Carlotta Walls LaNier, Section A2002\_117\_002\_005, TRT: 0:29:07

Carlotta Walls LaNier describes her experiences at Little Rock Central High School as part of the Little Rock Nine. After three weeks of litigation, the nine black students were permitted to integrate the school. The mob of protestors led President Dwight Eisenhower to send federal troops to assist the students. Despite having an armed guard assigned, many white students continually tormented the Little Rock Nine. Minnijean Brown was expelled for dumping a bowl of chili on her tormenter's head. In 1958, Orval Faubus, the governor of Arkansas, shut down the public schools in Little Rock, so LaNier took correspondence courses. LaNier maintained focused

on her goal to earn high grades and graduate from Little Rock Central High School which she did in 1960.

Video Oral History Interview with Carlotta Walls LaNier, Section A2002\_117\_002\_006, TRT: 0:30:23

Carlotta Walls LaNier describes her time at Little Rock Central High School and reflects on the legacy of the Little Rock Nine. LaNier recalls the treatment that she received from white students that ranged from harassment to being helpful. LaNier attended Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan for two years before moving with her family to Denver, Colorado in 1962. In 1968, she earned a B.S. degree from Colorado State College [now the University of Northern Colorado]. LaNier did not talk about the events at Central High School or return to Little Rock, Arkansas until the NAACP commemorated the thirtieth anniversary in 1988. LaNier describes the impressive accomplishments of each individual in the Little Rock Nine. In 1999, President William J. [Bill] Clinton bestowed the nation's highest civilian award, the Congressional Gold Medal, to the members of the Little Rock Nine.