

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Josie Johnson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Johnson, Josie, 1930-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Josie Johnson,
Dates:	August 11, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:43:15).
Abstract:	Academic administrator and education consultant Josie Johnson (1930 -) was the founder of the Black Studies department at University of Minnesota and a member of the Minnesota Board of Regents. Johnson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 11, 2002, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2002_143
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Born in 1931, Josie Robinson Johnson has played an active role in the civil rights movement since her teenage years, when she and her father canvassed her hometown of Houston to gather signatures on an anti-poll tax petition.

In the early 1960s, Johnson lobbied professionally for passage of bills concerning such issues as fair housing and employment opportunities. In 1964, she traveled from Minneapolis to Mississippi with an integrated group of women to witness and take part in the struggle there. After visiting an open-air freedom school where blacks were organizing, the group learned the school was bombed later that

day. Johnson became a community organizer for Project ENABLE, a pioneering effort in developing parenting skills and strengthening family life in 1965. A member of the Minneapolis Urban League, she served as acting director between 1967 and 1968.

Johnson worked with elected officials many times over the years. In 1968, she became a legislative liaison and community liaison as a mayoral aide in Minneapolis during a time of trouble for African Americans in the town. The executive assistant to the lieutenant governor of Colorado from 1975 to 1978, Johnson went back to Texas in 1978 and supervised Judson Robinson's campaign staff. In 1980, she served as deputy campaign manager for the Jimmy Carter presidential campaign in Tennessee.

Johnson has also had an ongoing relationship with the University of Minnesota. Between 1971 and 1973, she served on the University's Board of Regents. She earned a B.A. in Sociology at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and an M.A. and Ed.D. at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. The University of Minnesota offered her a senior fellowship in 1987. Johnson directed its All-University Forum as diversity director from 1990 to 1992. That year, she became responsible for minority affairs and diversity at the college as the associate vice president for academic affairs. The University of Minnesota established the annual Josie Robinson Johnson Human Rights and Social Justice Award in her honor.

Johnson founded Josie Robinson Johnson and Associates in 1996. She is a Minneapolis Institute of Arts trustee, a Minnesota Medical Foundation trustee and sits on the advisory board of the Harriet Tubman Center. She is a recipient of the Committed to the Vision Award from the Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights and the African American Community Endowment Fund Award.

Josie Johnson CivicMaker Educator b. 1931 151 words

Josie Johnson was born on October 7, 1930, in Houston. As the daughter of Houston civil rights pioneers, she grew up with a deep concern for social justice and civil rights. After receiving her B.A. in sociology from Fisk University and her M.A. in education from the University of Massachusetts, Johnson went to work in 1956 as a lobbyist to help pass Minnesota's anti-discrimination laws. In 1967, she served one year as the acting director for the Minneapolis Urban League. In 1971, after teaching in the African American Studies Department at the University of Minnesota, she was appointed to the Minnesota Board of Regents, where she served until 1973. In 1992, she accepted the position as associate vice president in charge of minority affairs and directed their All-University Forum as diversity director. The University of Minnesota established the Annual Josie

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Josie Johnson was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 11, 2002, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Academic administrator and education consultant Josie Johnson (1930 -) was the founder of the Black Studies department at University of Minnesota and a member of the Minnesota Board of Regents.

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:

Johnson, Josie, 1930-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Johnson, Josie, 1930---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

University of Minnesota

Occupations:

Academic Administrator

Education Consultant

HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

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 Josie Johnson, August 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).

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 Josie Johnson, Section
A2002_143_001_001, TRT: 0:30:29 2002/08/11

Josie Johnson describes her family background. Her mother, Josie McCullough Robinson, was born on May 7, 1907 in Houston, Texas. Her maternal great-grandfather fled the potato famine in Ireland. Her maternal grandmother owned a drug store in San Antonio, Texas. Johnson's father, Judson W. Robinson was born on February 7, 1904 in Crockett, Texas to Willie Robinson, a Baptist preacher. Her paternal great-grandfather was a

former slave who lived to be 112 and told stories of his job putting out the foot stool for people to get down from coaches. Johnson's parents met while attending Prairie View University in Texas. Her father worked for the railroad as a dining car waiter for A. Philip Randolph. Johnson remembers playing with her brothers and living in a close knit neighborhood in Houston, Texas. She attended all-black St. Nicholas Catholic School from kindergarten through twelfth grade and graduated from there in 1947. Her parents were active in the community and served as her role models.

Video Oral History Interview with Josie Johnson, Section
A2002_143_001_002, TRT: 0:29:10 2002/08/11

Josie Johnson talks about her education and young adulthood. Johnson avoided attributes feelings of inferiority due to her family's protectiveness, living in an all-black neighborhood, and avoiding public transportation. In high school at St. Nicholas Catholic School, Johnson played the piano and performed in school plays. Johnson attended Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee with the intention of going into medicine. She graduated in 1951 with a bachelor's degree and then pursued graduate work in sociology at Southern Texas University in Houston, Texas. After her husband completed his military service, they moved to Boston, Massachusetts where he attended M.I.T. and she worked at a chemistry lab at Harvard University. When her husband was hired at Honeywell, their family moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota where Johnson became involved in the NAACP and many other community organizations. She also helped Mahmoud El-Kati develop the African-American Studies program at the University of Minnesota.

Video Oral History Interview with Josie Johnson, Section
A2002_143_001_003, TRT: 0:30:30 2002/08/11

Josie Johnson talks about her civil rights activism. Johnson recalls that the black community in Minneapolis, Minnesota felt solidarity with those in the South in the 1960s. Johnson traveled to Jackson, Mississippi in 1964 as part of Dorothy Height's program "Wednesdays in Mississippi" in which groups of women traveled to Mississippi to report on the Civil Rights struggle. While in

Mississippi, Johnson attended a community meeting at a church that men guarded with shotguns. She also went to a Freedom School in Vicksburg, Mississippi which was bombed the next day. When she returned, Johnson shared her firsthand experiences with others. Malcolm Moos, the President of the University of Minnesota was responsive to student protests and instituted the African American Studies program in 1967. Along with other faculty including Lillian Anthony, Johnson developed the program with an emphasis on community involvement. Johnson comments on the importance of teaching about the contributions of African Americans.

Video Oral History Interview with Josie Johnson, Section
A2002_143_001_004, TRT: 0:29:40 2002/08/11

Josie Johnson talks about her political involvement. Johnson served as Chief of Staff for HistoryMaker Lieutenant Governor George Brown in Denver, Colorado. During his tenure, they sponsored an “Arts in the Capital” program that highlighted artists of color and worked to increase minorities’ union membership. Johnson worked on her brother’s campaign in Houston, Texas before returning to the University of Minnesota as a senior fellow in the College of Education in 1985. Johnson talks about the dispute over busing in Minneapolis, Minnesota schools. While busing is typically seen as a means of integration, Johnson contends that discrimination persists in schools and resources should be used to strengthen community schools. Johnson comments on the systemic racism that has caused a number of health and social problems for the black community. Having witnessed history repeating itself, Johnson sees hopelessness in the community and points out the better treatment of recently immigrated Africans.

Video Oral History Interview with Josie Johnson, Section
A2002_143_001_005, TRT: 0:30:50 2002/08/11

Josie Johnson describes her efforts to bridge the African American and Jewish communities in Minneapolis, Minnesota following HM Minister Louis Farrakhan’s visit to the University of Minnesota. Johnson organized focus groups and panels as part of a two-year plan to bring together African Americans and Jews. Johnson then

became the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs at the University of Minnesota where she worked to increase retention and recruitment of faculty and students of color. Johnson helped to make diversity a centerpiece of the university's strategic plan and to help fund departments hiring faculty of color. Johnson reflects upon being a black woman in academia, her legacy, and her parents' pride in her accomplishments. Johnson wants to be remembered as a fair and tireless advocate for civil rights and human rights. Johnson concludes by narrating her photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Josie Johnson, Section
A2002_143_001_006, TRT: 0:12:36 2002/08/11

Josie Johnson narrates her photographs.