Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Blondell Reynolds Brown

Overview of the Collection

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

Creator: Brown, Blondell Reynolds

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Blondell Reynolds Brown,

Dates: September 10, 2002

Bulk Dates: 2002

Physical Description: 4 Betacam SP videocassettes (1:57:22).

Abstract: City council member Blondell Reynolds Brown (1952 - ) has served as community affairs director for State Senator Vincent Hughes and was elected to the Philadelphia City Council. Brown was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 10, 2002, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

Identification: A2002_181

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Philadelphia City Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown was the oldest of seven children. She was born on the 10th of October 1952 in Sumter, South Carolina. Her mother, Sadie, taught school and her father, Whittimore Reynolds, worked in construction. Blondell Reynolds Brown is not only a political leader, she is also an educator and community activist.

Four years after graduating from the Philadelphia High School for Girls in 1970, Brown (then Reynolds) obtained a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Penn State University. In 1975, she earned a master's degree in education, having focused on counseling and guidance. That year, Brown began teaching at the elementary level in Philadelphia's public schools. Brown has served children, adolescents and young adults throughout her career. This work has included counseling juvenile delinquents in Pennsylvania's family court unit; supervising summer youth programs in the Philadelphia Opportunities Industrialization Center; and recruiting students for Pennsylvania State University. At the same time, Brown became politically active. She served as a committee person for the 24th Ward, Third Division from 1982 to 1986 and attended the Democratic National Convention as a delegate in 1984, 1988, 1996 and 2000. In 1991, Brown achieved her first full-time job in politics when Senator Chaka Fattah hired her as his legislative director. Brown served as community affairs director for State Senator Vincent Hughes before campaigning in 1999 and winning a seat on the Philadelphia City Council.

Brown has participated in such programs as the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Urban Health Initiative, which aims to institute systemic policy changes for children and youth nationally. Her
signature program, held annually in March, is called "Women Making a Difference Celebration." Brown advocates for arts education and has taught weekly dance classes to children for over twenty years and previously served as a board member of Phildanco, a professional dance company. The boards of the Philadelphia Cultural Fund, the National Abortion Rights Action League, the Wellness Center and Presbyterian Hospital have also benefited from her leadership. Blondell Reynolds Brown married Howard Brown in 1994.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Blondell Reynolds Brown was conducted by Larry Crowe on September 10, 2002, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and was recorded on 4 Betacam SP videocassettes. City council member Blondell Reynolds Brown (1952 - ) has served as community affairs director for State Senator Vincent Hughes and was elected to the Philadelphia City Council.

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:

Brown, Blondell Reynolds

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)
Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Brown, Blondell Reynolds--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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 2/6/2013 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, September 10, 2002
Video Oral History Interview with Blondell Reynolds Brown, Section A2002_181_001_001, TRT: 0:30:35 2002/09/10

Philadelphia’s City Councilwoman-at-large, Blondell Reynolds Brown was born on October 10, 1952 in Sumter, South Carolina. Her father was Whittimore Reynolds and her mother was Sadie Reynolds; they were both from Columbia, South Carolina. Her mother was a teacher and her father was a construction worker. He completed high school but did not attend college, while Brown’s mother received a bachelor’s degree from Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, North Carolina. Brown’s parents met in Columbia but moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania after they were married. They had seven children together and Brown was the oldest—as the oldest child Brown was expected to set an example for her younger siblings.

African American families--South Carolina.
Bennett College (Greensboro, N.C.).
African American families--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.
African American mothers--Pennsylvania.

Video Oral History Interview with Blondell Reynolds Brown, Section A2002_181_001_002, TRT: 0:30:31 2002/09/10

Blondell Reynolds Brown discusses her educational experience at Penn State University and her activities with the university’s annual black arts festival and Paul Robeson Cultural Center. She also talks about giving birth to her daughter, Brielle Autumn Brown in 1996 and then running for city councilwoman-at-large in 1999— an election, which Brown won. She admits the public office was never really a career goal; she sort of happened on it when the former state Senator of Pennsylvania, Chaka Fattah asked her to come and work for him as a legislative aid on the Senate education committee in the 1980s.

Paul Robeson Cultural Center.
Mothers and daughters.
Fattah, Chaka, 1956-
Political campaigns--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.
Philadelphia (Pa.). City Council

Video Oral History Interview with Blondell Reynolds Brown, Section A2002_181_001_003, TRT: 0:31:00 2002/09/10

Blondell Reynolds Brown describes her work as Philadelphia’s city councilwoman-at-large and the opportunity it gives her to focus on broad public policy issues. As a result of her love of dance and prior experience serving on the Philadelphia Dance Company’s board of directors, Brown was also appointed chair of the Committee on Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs by the committee’s President, Anna C.
Verna. Brown sponsored a resolution for children highlighting the value of arts education in Philadelphia and believes that Philadelphia is rich with talent and opportunities for those who love and care about the arts. Moreover, Brown explains that she also gets the opportunity to speak to people about women’s issues and politics in a signature event she started called “Women Making a Difference”.

Philadelphia Dance Company.
Percent for Art Program (Philadelphia, Pa.).
African American entertainers.
Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts.

Video Oral History Interview with Blondell Reynolds Brown, Section A2002_181_001_004, TRT: 0:25:16 2002/09/10

Blondell Reynolds Brown talks about her high school experience and shares several photos of her friends, family and political activities.

High school graduates.
African American dancers.
Brown, Joan Myers.
Political organizations.
Gore, Al, 1948-