

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable 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, 1952-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Blondell Reynolds Brown,
Dates:	September 10, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:57:22).
Abstract:	City council member The Honorable 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 The Honorable Blondell Reynolds Brown was conducted by Larry Crowe on September 10, 2002, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. City council member The Honorable 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, 1952-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Bieschke, Paul (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Brown, Blondell Reynolds, 1952---Interviews

African American politicians--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Philadelphia (Pa.)

Occupations:

City Council Member

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

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Blondell Reynolds Brown, September 10, 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

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 The Honorable Blondell Reynolds Brown, Section A2002_181_001_001, TRT: 0:30:35 2002/09/10

Blondell Reynolds Brown describes her upbringing. She was born to Whittimore and Sadie Reynolds on October 10, 1952 in Sumter, South Carolina. Sadie Reynolds was born on a farm in Elliot, South Carolina as one of sixteen children. She met and married Whittimore Reynolds in Columbia, South Carolina. The couple moved with Brown to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1958, and settled in a two bedroom home in North Philadelphia. They later moved to a five bedroom home in Southwest Philadelphia. As a youth, Brown enjoyed reading and participating in arts and crafts at the local Boys and Girls Club. She enrolled at Philadelphia High School for Girls in 1966, where she was a member of the gymnastics team and cheerleading squad. Brown enrolled at Pennsylvania State University in 1970, where she was active on the university dance team, cheerleading squad and treasurer of the student council. She graduated in 1974, and enrolled in graduate school at the university, earning her M.S. degree in education in 1975.

African American families--South Carolina.

Bennett College (Greensboro, N.C.).

African American families--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.

African American mothers--Pennsylvania.

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

Blondell Reynolds Brown organized the Black Cultural Festival as a student at Pennsylvania State University. This led to her graduate assistantship at the university's Paul Robeson Cultural Center. After graduating with her M.S. degree in education in 1975, Brown began teaching in Philadelphia Public Schools. In 1980, Brown met HistoryMaker Chaka Fattah. Fattah was elected to the Philadelphia House of Representatives in 1982, after which he invited Brown to volunteer on his team. Around 1988, then-Senator Fattah hired Brown as a legislative aide for his Senate Education Committee. After Fattah won a seat in Congress in 1995, Brown elected to stay in Pennsylvania and run for a seat on the Philadelphia City Council. She lost this election, and gave birth to her daughter in 1996. In 1999, Brown ran again and won. She describes the challenges and triumphs she has faced as a City Councilwoman, and talks about keeping her constituents informed and compromising to get legislation passed.

Paul Robeson Cultural Center.

Mothers and daughters.

Fattah, Chaka, 1956-

Political campaigns--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia.

Philadelphia (Pa.). City Council

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

Blondell Reynolds Brown became a professional dancer with the Philadelphia Dance Company, and worked as a teacher, after completing graduate school in 1975. Brown performed in the show "Hello Broadway" in Atlantic City, New Jersey from 1980 to 1981, and taught dance classes from 1981 to 1995. Given her love of dance and culture, Brown was appointed as Chairwoman of the Committee on Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs for the Philadelphia City Council. Brown spearheaded the "One Percent for Art" program, which requires that one percent of city-supported developers' budgets go to city art programs. She also increased the city's cultural fund by

\$250,000, and sponsored a resolution to provide city funding for after-school arts programs. Brown talks about Philadelphia's rich culture, her signature event, "Women Making a Difference", and her hopes and concerns for the African American community. Brown reflects upon her legacy and how she would like to be remembered, and narrates her photographs, as well.

Philadelphia Dance Company.

Percent for Art Program (Philadelphia, Pa.).

African American entertainers.

Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts.

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

Blondell Reynolds Brown narrates her photographs.

High school graduates.

African American dancers.

Brown, Joan Myers.

Political organizations.

Gore, Al, 1948-