

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dale Clinton

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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>	Clinton, Dale, 1927-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dale Clinton,
<b>Dates:</b>	November 21, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:24:56).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Community activist and community resource specialist Dale Clinton (1927 - ) wrote what became a widely publicized and influential letter to President Lyndon Johnson, defending welfare and the plight of poor mothers. This prompted her appointment to professional work in service for her local community of Long Beach, California. Clinton was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 21, 2002, in Long Beach, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_213
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Community volunteer and community resource specialist Dale E. Clinton was born June 10, 1927, in Tupelo, Mississippi. She attended George Washington Carver School in segregated Tupelo. Her family moved to Chicago when she was fourteen years old. Clinton graduated from Chicago's Wendell Phillips High School in June 1944. She enrolled in Wilson Junior College, Cortez Typing School, and studied commercial law and nursing while working for Spiegel,

International Harvester and other manufacturing companies. Clinton received a political education organizing youth volunteers for Chicago's black congressman, William L. Dawson.

In 1959 Clinton moved to California. By the mid 1960s, she was a struggling single mother of five children living on a monthly \$333 welfare check. However, local Head Start officials urged her involvement in the Neighborhood Adult Participation Program. When Los Angeles Mayor Sam Yorty called for the eradication of federal welfare programs, Clinton wrote a letter to President Lyndon Johnson defending the plight of poor mothers. The letter was soon published in the major dailies nationwide and featured in *Parade*. Congressman Augustus F. Hawkins read the letter into the *Congressional Record*. The letter impressed Sargent Shriver and trickled down to local human services officials. Soon, Clinton was sought for her advice and was appointed to the board of the local Community Action Agency. She accepted an offer for postgraduate training in community relations and eventually worked on the executive staff of the Office of Community and Human Relations for the city of Long Beach.

Clinton is the recipient of numerous awards and plaques for championing welfare rights, fair housing and economic development. Now retired, she still lives in Long Beach where she is helping to raise her grandchildren.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dale Clinton was conducted by Larry Crowe on November 21, 2002, in Long Beach, California, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Community activist and community resource specialist Dale Clinton (1927 - ) wrote what became a widely publicized and influential letter to President Lyndon Johnson, defending welfare and the plight of poor mothers. This prompted her appointment to professional work in service for her local community of Long Beach, California.

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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:

Clinton, Dale, 1927-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Clinton, Dale, 1927---Interviews

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Community activists--Interviews

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African American political activists--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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Long Beach (Calif.). Dept. of Health and Human Services

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## **Occupations:**

Community Activist

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Community Resource Specialist

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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 Dale Clinton, November 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 Dale Clinton, Section  
A2002\_213\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:30 2002/11/21

Dale Clinton was born on June 10, 1927 in Tupelo, Mississippi to Benny A. Head, who was from Baldwyn, Mississippi, and Sally Elizabeth Ward Head, who was born in 1910 in Verona, Mississippi. Clinton paternal grandfather was a Baptist minister, and her maternal grandfather, John Ward, was part Indian. Bush's mother worked as a domestic, preparing meals for wealthier families, and her father worked as a janitor at stores around town. He also distilled and distributed whiskey illegally. Clinton and her older brothers lived near her grandparents growing up, and her family attended the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, now the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. She witnessed racism growing up in Tupelo and her godfather was nearly lynched. Clinton attended the segregated high school, George Washington Carver High School, in Tupelo.

Community activists--Interviews.

African American political activists--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Dale Clinton, Section  
A2002\_213\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:50 2002/11/21

Dale Clinton describes her education and early career. Clinton remembers that she was a tough young girl who

climbed trees, liked BB guns, and was not interested in feminine activities. She recalls getting in trouble for stealing fruit from a neighbor's orchard and the quarters she took from her mother to buy chocolate. Clinton attended George Washington Carver High School in Tupelo, Mississippi. In 1942, when Clinton was fourteen years old, her father moved the family to Chicago, Illinois after he stabbed his racist supervisor at the cotton gin for demanding that he move four hay bales by himself. In Chicago, Clinton stayed with a cousin in a small apartment until the rest of her family joined them. After graduating from Wendell Phillips Academy High School in Chicago in 1944, Clinton briefly attended nursing courses, Wilson Junior College and typing school before getting married and having children. Clinton then worked at International Harvest, Chicago Mail Order, and RR Donnelly in Chicago, Illinois.

Video Oral History Interview with Dale Clinton, Section  
A2002\_213\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:30 2002/11/21

Dale Clinton describes her adult life and becoming a single mother. In Chicago, Illinois, Clinton attended Antioch Baptist Church and New Covenant Baptist Church where she knew HistoryMaker John H. Johnson, Reverend Joseph Jackson, and Reverend Elijah Thurston. Clinton also was able to meet famous gospel singers like the Roberta Martin Singers, Ozella Weber, and Mahalia Jackson at her church. She volunteered for U.S. Congressman William L. Dawson in Chicago. In 1954, she married her husband James Clinton after getting pregnant with their first child. Clinton moved to Los Angeles, California in 1959 and had four more children before leaving her husband due to his alcoholism in 1962. Clinton explains why she saw single motherhood as a better option than to stay in an abusive marriage. Clinton worked at the Lafayette Hotel and Packard Bell in Long Beach, California and went on welfare in 1965. That year, she also became involved with Head Start and the Neighborhood Adult Participation Program (NAPP).

Video Oral History Interview with Dale Clinton, Section  
A2002\_213\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:21 2002/11/21

Dale Clinton talks about her community activism. As a

struggling single mother of five children, Clinton wrote a letter to President Lyndon Johnson defending the plight of poor mothers after Los Angeles Mayor Sam Yorty called for the eradication of the federal welfare program. The letter received national media attention, and Congressman Augustus F. Hawkins read the letter into the Congressional Record. Clinton was sought for her advice and was appointed to the board of the local Community Action Agency. She accepted an offer for postgraduate training in community relations at the University of California Los Angeles in the 1960s. While campaigning in Nevada in 1968, Clinton learned that Senator Robert Kennedy had been assassinated. Clinton also recalls the 1965 Watts riots in Los Angeles, California. Despite her community involvement, Clinton never had political aspirations. Clinton shares her hopes and concerns for the black community and reflects upon her legacy.

Video Oral History Interview with Dale Clinton, Section  
A2002\_213\_001\_005, TRT: 0:25:45 2002/11/21

Dale Clinton describes how she would like to be remembered as “the lady with the smile” who tried to be helpful and loving. Clinton talks about how she yearned for companionship despite displaying a strong exterior while raising five children in poverty. Clinton continues to take care of her family and actively helps transport her grandchildren to school. Clinton talks about her eldest son who was murdered. She describes the social problems that have arisen due to the prevalence of cocaine and states that if she were younger, she would be a police officer in order to eradicate the drug. Clinton concludes by narrating her photographs.