

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Audrey Grevious

Overview of the Collection

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| Repository: | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com |
| Creator: | Grevious, Audrey, 1930-2017 |
| Title: | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Audrey Grevious, |
| Dates: | December 11, 2002 |
| Bulk Dates: | 2002 |
| Physical Description: | 5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:16:35). |
| Abstract: | Civil rights activist and high school teacher Audrey Grevious (1930 - 2017) was a NAACP desegregation leader in Lexington, Kentucky, who worked closely with CORE. Grevious was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 11, 2002, in Lexington, Kentucky. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| Identification: | A2002_226 |
| Language: | The interview and records are in English. |

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Social activist Audrey Grevious was born in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1930 and has remained there most of her life. After graduating from Dunbar High School, she attended Kentucky State University in Frankfort, earning a B.A. in elementary education, and later earned a master's in administration from Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond.

After graduating, Grevious first taught at, and later became principal of Kentucky Village, a state reformatory for delinquent boys. Following the closing of the school, she taught in Fayette County Public Schools, where she remained until she

retired. More than a teacher, Grevious also became active with the NAACP in the late 1940s. She also became active with the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE). As the civil rights movement heated up, Grevious rose to become the president of the Lexington chapter of the NAACP while her friend and vice president Julia Lewis became the president of CORE. The two brought the two organizations together, organizing protests, pickets and sit-ins, and successfully and peacefully achieved their objectives. This marked the first time that the NAACP and CORE had worked together, as ideological differences at the national level had previously kept the groups apart.

Over the years, Grevious has remained involved with the NAACP. Since her retirement, she has become involved in a number of organizations. She currently serves on the board of directors of The Humanitarium, an organization devoted to celebrating diversity. She is also a member of the board of the Community Reinvestment Housing Project, which provides counseling to first-time homebuyers, a member of the board and the former president of Kentucky Tech, and the secretary of her church, Pilgrim Baptist. She is also the president of the Elder Crafters, an organization of senior citizens who make crafts. As a group, they enjoy bowling, and Grevious' home is filled with trophies from the sport.

Grevious passed away on January 6, 2017 at age 86.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Audrey Grevious was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 11, 2002, in Lexington, Kentucky, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civil rights activist and high school teacher Audrey Grevious (1930 - 2017) was a NAACP desegregation leader in Lexington, Kentucky, who worked closely with CORE.

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:

Grevious, Audrey, 1930-2017

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Grevious, Audrey, 1930-2017--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Civil Rights Activist

High School Teacher

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers|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 Audrey Grevious, December 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 Audrey Grevious, Section
A2002_226_001_001, TRT: 0:29:15 2002/12/11

Audrey Grevious was born on September 3, 1930 in Lexington, Kentucky to James Washington and Martha Ross. Her father was born in Frankfort, Kentucky and worked as a teacher in Monticello, Kentucky. Her mother grew up poor in Monticello and worked as a nanny. Grevious' mother married and divorced Frank Ross when Grevious was very young. Grevious and her brother were raised by her mother, and she did not know her biological father and her stepfather well. She grew up in a tight-knit African American community in Lexington by the Aspendale Housing Projects. Grevious recalls her excitement when the projects were built and her disappointment when the black middle class rather than the poor moved into the projects. Grevious owes some her rearing to neighbors who looked after children in the community. She describes the sights, sounds, and smells of her childhood. As a child, Grevious went to segregated theaters and schools. At school, she was taught to rise above racist remarks in the school's secondhand books.

Video Oral History Interview with Audrey Grevious, Section
A2002_226_001_002, TRT: 0:29:25 2002/12/11

Audrey Grevious describes growing up in Lexington, Kentucky. Her headstrong personality emerged early on. Due to her mother's hours as a nanny, neighbors in the community looked after Grevious and her younger brother. Grevious attended Constitution Street School and Dunbar High School, which were both black schools. She excelled academically at Dunbar High School and her teachers played an influential role in nurturing her potential; they raised money to help send top students like Grevious to college. Grevious has fond memories of hanging out on Dewey Street and Georgetown Street in Lexington, and at Ballard's Drugstore as a high school

student with other teenagers and rushing home before curfew. She discovered an early affinity for teaching children and after graduating from Dunbar High School in 1948, Grevious attended Kentucky State University in Frankfort, Kentucky where she studied elementary education. At Kentucky State, highly-qualified teachers pushed her to excel and readied her for institutional change. Grevious worked as a freshman and left the university after one year.

Video Oral History Interview with Audrey Grevious, Section
A2002_226_001_003, TRT: 0:29:45 2002/12/11

Audrey Grevious graduated from Kentucky State University with a bachelor's degree in elementary education in 1957, a decade after she first enrolled in 1948; she dropped out after her freshman year to work. Grevious then became more involved with the NAACP, attending its national convention in New York. At the convention, she volunteered to test restaurant service in the South. Grevious became the president of the local NAACP chapter in Lexington, Kentucky. She worked closely with the local CORE president, Julia Lewis, to target racial discrimination in the workplace and to protest segregation. The two women organized city-wide sit-ins at lunch counters with the support of the local police chief. Grevious describes aggressive responses from store owners and white clientele and the disappointing lack of engagement from local African American religious leaders with the exception of Reverend William A. Jones, Sr. of Pleasant Green Baptist Church. She also describes racial discrimination after she was arrested.

Video Oral History Interview with Audrey Grevious, Section
A2002_226_001_004, TRT: 0:30:00 2002/12/11

Audrey Grevious led protests to integrate theaters in Lexington, Kentucky with Julia Lewis, the local president of CORE. Although the protests were successful, white-owned theaters prevented the local black theater, Lyric Theatre, from playing first-run movies and the theater went out of business. Through organizing protests and sit-ins, Grevious discovered that many white businesspeople wanted the economic boon of integration, but succumbed to the social pressure to maintain segregation. Other

storeowners were vehemently opposed to integration, one attempted to get Grevious fired from her teaching position at the Kentucky Village Reform School. Grevious later integrated Kentucky Village's cafeteria, her classroom, and then the entire school. Despite the troubled history between the NAACP and CORE, Grevious and Lewis worked together to lead a powerful movement in Lexington that led to the integration of theaters, businesses, schools, and workplaces in the city. However, Grevious' home was vandalized by the Ku Klux Klan despite the movement's non-violent approach.

Video Oral History Interview with Audrey Grevious, Section A2002_226_001_005, TRT: 0:18:10 2002/12/11

Audrey Grevious worked as a teacher at Kentucky Village Reform School for delinquent youth in Lexington, Kentucky. She worked to integrate the school and eventually became its school principal. After the school closed, Grevious taught in Fayette County Public Schools for about thirty years. Although Grevious and Julia Lewis played pivotal roles in leading the Civil Rights Movement in Lexington, Kentucky, their work received little recognition. Although she is not vocal about her contributions, Grevious taught children in her neighborhood about the Civil Rights Movement. Grevious talks about her mother and brother's support. She also reflects upon her legacy and how she would like to be remembered.