Overview of the Collection

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

Creator: Manning, Blanche

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Blanche Manning,

Dates: March 26, 2003

Bulk Dates: 2003

Physical Description: 5 Betacam SP videocassettes (2:13:20).

Abstract: Federal district court judge The Honorable Blanche Manning (1934 - ) was the first African American woman to serve on the Illinois Appellate Court. In 1994, President Bill Clinton appointed Manning as district court judge for the Northern District of Illinois. Manning was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 26, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

Identification: A2003_055

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

The appointment of Blanche M. Manning as United States District Court judge marks a momentous moment in Illinois history. Born December 12, 1934, in Chicago, Manning discovered her passion for law while working as a legal secretary to finance a bachelor's degree in education at DePaul University. She taught in Chicago public schools before pursuing a J.D. at John Marshall Law School. A jazz musician and enthusiast, Manning also studied music at Roosevelt University. She earned a master's of the laws of judicial process from the University of Virginia Law School.

In 1968, Manning began an exemplary legal career as assistant prosecutor in the Cook County State's Attorney's Office. She subsequently worked as an attorney for the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, United Airlines and the United States Attorney's Office. Manning was promoted to judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County in 1979. When she was elected to the Illinois Appellate Court in 1987, she became the first African American female member of that court. Accepting an appointment by President Bill Clinton, Manning began a lifetime position as district court jurist for the Northern District of Illinois in 1994. Her role in high-profile cases is chronicled in newspapers and books. Manning, who has contributed to workshops at the University of Chicago and Harvard law schools, served as adjunct professor of law at DePaul University College of Law. She is a fellow of the American Bar Association.

Manning has played in numerous jazz bands, and she regularly assembles her own band, Diversity, composed of musicians of diverse backgrounds. She has been involved in community development, and she received a "We Care" Role Model Award from Chicago police and public schools for ten consecutive years. Manning and her husband, William, whom she married in 1957, raised six nieces and nephews.
Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Blanche Manning was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 26, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacam SP videocassettes. Federal district court judge The Honorable Blanche Manning (1934 - ) was the first African American woman to serve on the Illinois Appellate Court. In 1994, President Bill Clinton appointed Manning as district court judge for the Northern District of Illinois.

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:

Manning, Blanche

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Manning, Blanche--Interviews

African American lawyers.

African American judges.
Organizations:

- HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)
- The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection
- United States. District Court (Illinois : Northern District)

HistoryMakers® Category:

- LawMakers

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 1/21/2013 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, March 26, 2003

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Blanche Manning, Section A2003_055_001_001, TRT: 0:29:14 2003/03/26

Blanche Manning slates the interview by answering introductory questions. Manning discusses her family’s background, which stems from Memphis,
Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers ® Video Oral History with The Honorable Blanche Manning

Tennessee, her early childhood growing up in the “Black Belt” also referred to as the Bronzerville neighborhood on the south side of Chicago, her academic career and the beginning of her professional career. Manning remembers before moving from the 3600 S. Vincennes Avenue block witnessing one of the groups of the Chicago street gang, a large group of young men that traveled together throughout the neighborhood and terrorized neighbors, what she considers to be the beginning of black street gangs. Manning also describes first-hand accounts of racism in the West Chesterfield community, the neighborhood her family moved to from Bronzerville. Manning discusses her academic career from elementary school education through college and some of the lessons and experiences she gained along the way including her introduction to music.

Education & culture.
African American neighborhoods--Illinois.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Blanche Manning, Section A2003_055_001_002, TRT: 0:30:00 2003/03/26

Blanche Manning discusses how she took notice of the civil rights movement and the social climate during the 1960s, which encouraged her to become a lawyer. Her role model, Thurgood Marshall, provided an example of what she wanted to become in her professional career. Manning’s first job in the law profession was as a secretary for the Stark and Langland law firm where she worked part time in the late 1950s. Manning decided to become a lawyer while working at the law firm. Manning entered John Marshall Law School in 1961 and graduated in 1967. Manning also discusses how she met her husband, balancing full time employment, attending law school and being a parent. Manning taught full time at various public and catholic elementary schools while obtaining her JD from John Marshall Law School. Manning also discusses working in the Cook County, Illinois States Attorney’s Office, the death penalty and the responsibilities of lawyers to uphold the law.

John Marshall Law School (Chicago, Illinois)
Marriage and Family Life.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Blanche Manning, Section A2003_055_001_003, TRT: 0:27:55 2003/03/26

Blanche Manning discusses employment as a prosecutor with the Cook County Illinois States Attorney’s office. Manning discusses employment with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the role of the organization. Manning discusses her most memorable and largest cases, which included A Pattern or Practice of Discrimination with the Railroad. Manning discusses being employed under Tom Sullivan in the United States Attorney’s Office. which only prosecuted cases with sufficient evidence to be tried. Manning remembers that many of her cases encompassed complex issues. Manning discusses the duties and responsibilities of working in the Civil Davison of the United States Attorney’s Office. Manning discusses her experience becoming a Cook County judge and the process of candidates who apply for the position. Manning discusses the roles of the Circuit and Appellate Courts and shares the details of a case to provide an example of how the two Courts work in conjunction.

Illinois. Office of the State's Attorneys Appellate Prosecutor.

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Discrimination--Law and legislation.
Judges--Illinois--Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Blanche Manning, Section A2003_055_001_004, TRT: 0:29:20 2003/03/26
Law enforcement--Illinois.
United States. District Court (Illinois : Northern District)
Judges--Selection and appointment.
Judges--Workload--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Blanche Manning, Section A2003_055_001_005, TRT: 0:16:51 2003/03/26
Blanche Manning discusses traits she shares with her parents. She feels the strongest trait she received from them was their hard work ethic. Manning explains that her parents had high expectations of her, which is why her father would not allow her become a professional jazz musician. Manning discusses her active music career and the many bands she has organized and participates in. Manning also discusses the various, venues including live on air and on television, she performs at. Manning shares what she wants her legacy to be and how she wants to be remembered. Manning provides details of the photographs that are included in the HistoryMakers interview. The photographs provide documentation of her academic and professional careers as well as her personal life with family and friends.
Jazz musicians.
Mentoring.