

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers ® Video Oral History with Adelaide Sanford

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Sanford, Adelaide, 1925-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Adelaide Sanford,
Dates:	September 19, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:15:29).
Abstract:	Education administrator and elementary school teacher Adelaide Sanford (1925 -) is vice chancellor of the State University of New York's Board of Regents and was an Afrocentric educator for many years in Brooklyn. Sanford was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 19, 2003, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_219
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Educator Adelaide L. Sanford was born in Brooklyn on November 27, 1925. Sanford studied at Brooklyn College, where she earned her B.Ed. degree in 1947; she received her M.Ed. degree from Wellesley College three years later. From 1950 to 1965, Sanford taught in New York's elementary schools, before being hired as an assistant principal. Sanford earned her Ph.D. degree from Fordham University in 1967, and later became principal at Crispus Attucks School in Brooklyn, earning an outstanding reputation for promoting excellence and achievement at an inner-city school.

In 1986, Sanford won unanimous election to the Board of Regents of the State University of New York. As chairperson of the Regents' Committee on Low Performing Schools, Sanford played an instrumental role in shaping new educational policies that sought to close the gap among schools in student performance. Though outspoken and known for her African-style dress and Ebonics commentary, Sanford never wavered in her concern for the welfare of New York's students, particularly those at low-performing schools. While serving as a regent, Sanford also taught at Baruch College and Fordham University.

Many honors and awards were bestowed upon Sanford for her work; she received the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's humanitarian award, and distinguished alumna awards from Wellesley College and Brooklyn College. Sanford played an instrumental role in creating the John Henrick Clark meetinghouse. Sanford also served on the board of the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone, and as a national advisory board for multicultural education. Sanford and her husband, Jay, were married in 1955; the couple raised two children.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Adelaide Sanford was conducted by Cathy Sandler on September 19, 2003, in

New York, New York, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Education administrator and elementary school teacher Adelaide Sanford (1925 -) is vice chancellor of the State University of New York's Board of Regents and was an Afrocentric educator for many years in Brooklyn.

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:

Sanford, Adelaide, 1925-

Sandler, Cathy (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Sanford, Adelaide, 1925---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

New York City Public Schools.

Occupations:

Education Administrator

Elementary School Teacher

HistoryMakers® Category:

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 Adelaide Sanford, September 19, 2003. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 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 Adelaide Sanford, Section A2003_219_001_001, TRT: 0:29:23
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Adelaide Sanford speaks reverentially of her parents and their experiences as black people at the turn of the century. Most touching are her recollections of her mother, a woman widowed yet trying to express her creativity in an unaccepting world. Sanford describes the warm and open family home of her childhood, a place where friends and family were always welcome. Sanford also

lovingly describes her father, who struggled against his World War I injury-induced blindness and racial discrimination.

Video Oral History Interview with Adelaide Sanford, Section A2003_219_001_002, TRT: 0:29:31
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Adelaide Sanford recalls her environment growing up in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, and continues to discuss her family. Sanford tells stories about her grandmother's slavery, her aunt's forced sterilization, and her grandfather's life during slavery. Sanford also describes her education from elementary school through graduate school.

Video Oral History Interview with Adelaide Sanford, Section A2003_219_001_003, TRT: 0:30:17
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This segment is most notable for Sanford's recounting of a family road trip to Vicksburg gone horribly awry. After being forced off the road and into a ditch, Sanford's mother soon finds herself fending off prosecution from a racist judge and endures a surgical procedure without anesthesia. Sanford's also discusses her first teaching experiences and how her strong belief in the capacity of black children to succeed was often met with skepticism and roadblocks. Her efforts to gain quality education facilities for black children extended to workers as well. After prolonged wrangling with New York Mayor Robert Wagner, Sanford led the effort to ensure black laborers were able to work on school construction projects across the city.

Video Oral History Interview with Adelaide Sanford, Section A2003_219_001_004, TRT: 0:31:09
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Adelaide Sanford gives great detail on the hurdles encountered while trying to better education for her students. From administrators to other teachers, Sanford found herself battling on multiple fronts to give her students at Crispus Attucks School an equal opportunity to learn. Sanford also discusses how her efforts led her into school administration. Eventually, she was appointed as a Regent on the Board of Regents for the state of New York. Sanford also mentions influential black educators and historians who helped shape her educational philosophy.

The most pivotal aspect of the interview is the insight she offers into

Video Oral History Interview with Adelaide Sanford, Section A2003_219_001_005, TRT: 0:15:09
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This segment wraps up the interview with a few questions about what Sanford wants her legacy to be and how she's to be remembered. The majority of the segment is devoted to photos.