

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Linda M. White

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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>	White, Linda, 1942-2010
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Linda M. White,
<b>Dates:</b>	May 30, 2008 and October 8, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003 and 2008
<b>Physical Description:</b>	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (4:01:08).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Association chief executive and federal government administrator Linda M. White (1942 - 2010 ) was a former national president of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. White was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 30, 2008 and October 8, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_250
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

The 26th International President of Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) Sorority, Inc. (2002 – 2006) Linda White was born in Cleveland, Ohio to a dining car waiter and a homemaker. White worked for several years as a Social Security administrator while remaining active in the AKA Sorority. Under White's leadership the Sorority established the Ivy Reading AKAdemy and initiated the Centennial Traveling exhibit.

Raised in Chicago, White graduated from Parker High School in 1959 before matriculating to Clark College in Atlanta, Georgia. While at Clark, White became active with the AKA Sorority and received her B.A. degree in 1963. She later went to the University of Chicago where she completed her M.A. degree in 1969. After earning a certificate in systems from Stanford University, White moved to Washington, D.C. in 1971 to work as a management analyst in the Department of Health and Human Services. She served in that capacity for two years before returning to Chicago, where she worked for the Social Security Administration. There, White rose to the rank of area director, managing the Chicago East District Office and overseeing twenty-nine Social Security offices in the region.

Upon her retirement in 2002, White began working full-time for the AKA Sorority. Then in July 2002, she became the Sorority's International President. During her administration, White's plan was to push the use of technology, particularly the Internet, to facilitate communication both within and beyond the organization. Additionally, she has earmarked education, the family, health, economics and the arts as program targets.

Active for more than forty years at the local and national levels of the AKA Sorority, White has contributed more than twenty years of service to the organization's educational foundation and serves as national president of the committee. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) and a life member of the NAACP. For more than fifty years, White has been a member of St. Mark United Methodist Church, where she is a former president of the Administrative Board and past chairperson of the Council on

Ministries and Pastor/Parish Relations.

White lives in Chicago, Illinois.

White was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 30, 2008 as part of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority's Centennial Boulé 2008 celebration. Segments of these interviews were used in a DVD entitled *A.K.A. Sorority: A Legacy of Supreme Service*.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Linda M. White was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson and Larry Crowe on May 30, 2008 and October 8, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Association chief executive and federal government administrator Linda M. White (1942 - 2010 ) was a former national president of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

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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:

White, Linda, 1942-2010

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
White, Linda, 1942-2010 --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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United States. Social Security Administration

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Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority

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## Occupations:

Federal Government Administrator

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Association Chief Executive

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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 Linda M. White, May 30, 2008 and October 8, 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).

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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 Linda M. White, Section A2003\_250\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:54 ?

Linda M. White was born on April 21, 1942 in Cleveland, Ohio. Her mother, Mary Fennell White, was born in 1919 in Canton, Ohio. White's maternal family is from Rome, Georgia and she can trace her family back to her maternal great-great-grandmother Victoria who was born in approximately 1830. White's mother was a "people person" who was a homemaker and active in the PTA. When White was in high school her mother began working at the University of Chicago's hospital as a tray girl, and later advanced to management for the hospital's catering department. White's father, Lemnon Spruiell White, was born in 1907 in Mississippi. He was a quiet and religious man who worked for the New York Central Railroad and assumed an active role in his children's education. White remembers her father supported her decision to participate in a sit-in demonstration while in college in Atlanta, Georgia. White's father died when she was a sophomore in college.

Video Oral History Interview with Linda M. White, Section A2003\_250\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:03 ?

Linda M. White grew up in Chicago, Illinois on 62nd and South Parkway. The L train was a predominant feature of her childhood, particularly its sound at night. She enjoyed visiting 63rd Street Beach and St. Mark's United Methodist Church. White attended Betsy Ross Elementary School. She remembers the school's first black principal; she later learned that some of the white teachers did not want to work for a black woman. White was able to attend Parker High School in lieu of her neighborhood high school by using the address of a family friend. White was a member of the National Honor Society and participated on Parker's newspaper and yearbook committees. She graduated from high school in 1959 and enrolled in Clark College in Atlanta, Georgia where she was active in sit-ins and marches to integrate Rich's department store. White lists the leaders of the protests including HistoryMaker Julian Bond, Benjamin Brown, and Alfred Daniel Williams King, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s brother.

Video Oral History Interview with Linda M. White, Section A2003\_250\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:14 ?

Linda M. White was arrested and sent to jail in Atlanta, Georgia while participating in a civil rights protest. White joined Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority while an undergraduate at Clark College in Atlanta. Her pledge process was only six weeks. AKA was founded in 1908 at Howard University in Washington, D.C. by nine African American women, who were only one generation removed from slavery. One of the founders, Ethel Hedgeman Lyle, was from St. Louis, Missouri. Scholarship and service are two of the organization's hallmarks and it runs programs focused on health, education and the black family. White dismisses the belief that AKA is more of a social organization than Delta Sigma Theta Sorority which was formed in 1913. When compared to Greek letter organizations overall, black Greek letter organizations are more alumni-focused. White graduated from Clark in 1963 with a degree in social science and completed her M.A. in political science at the University of Chicago in Illinois.

Video Oral History Interview with Linda M. White, Section A2003\_250\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:44 ?

Linda M. White was a student speaker at a forum where Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke in the mid-1960s, when she was a student at the University of Chicago. She also worked at the University of Chicago Hospital as a medical transcriber while she was completing her degree. White earned her M.A. degree in political science from the University of Chicago in 1969. Following graduation, she worked for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and the Social Security Administration as a claims authorizer. She became president of Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) in 2002. AKA has chapters around the world. For White, the most rewarding parts of being president of AKA are knowing that others view her as an effective leader and the friendships that she has developed. She considers what she would have done differently; describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community and how she would like to be remembered; and, reflects upon her legacy. White concludes by narrating her photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Linda M. White, Section A2003\_250\_001\_005, TRT: 0:31:16 ?

Linda M. White narrates her photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Linda M. White, Section A2003\_250\_002\_006, TRT: 0:29:58 ?

Linda M. White joined Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority as a student at Clark College in Atlanta, Georgia. As an adult, she served in number of positions at the local and regional level, before serving as national secretary, then vice president and eventually being elected president in 2002. Through her involvement she developed a strong relationship with Marjorie Holloman Parker, a former national president and historian of the sorority. As president, White's goal was to strengthen the bonds of sisterhood. Her signature program was the Young Authors Program. She also implemented Ivy Reading AKAdemy which collected data from its demonstration sites to empirically test the impact of its one-to-one reading tutorial model. From running the program, White learned a lot about the transience of economically disadvantaged families. White surveyed the AKA membership to help her craft her vision for the organization; and, then constantly trained members and provided feedback in order to successfully execute her vision.

Video Oral History Interview with Linda M. White, Section A2003\_250\_002\_007, TRT: 0:31:49 ?

Linda M. White was installed as national president of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority in 2002. Her sister, brother, and godmother were present at the ceremony. During her presidency she commissioned Ernestine Greene McNealey to write 'Pearls of Service: the legacy of America's first black sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha.' In 2002, White faced a lawsuit brought against the organization regarding after the death of two women allegedly caused by hazing activities for the sorority. The organization was found not guilty, but White formed a risk management group to review organizational policies for membership intake and clarify the sorority's policies against hazing. White's legacy as national president are the two volumes of 'The Spirit Within: Voices of Young Authors' which were published as part of the Young Authors program. White expresses her concerns for AKA and explains the concept of sisterhood. She believes it is important the organization continues to adapt to serve the future needs of its members.

Video Oral History Interview with Linda M. White, Section A2003\_250\_002\_008, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Linda M. White served as an area director for the Social Security Administration prior to becoming national president of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. She believes the managerial skills she gained through her job prepared her for her role as president; and, her experiences, especially traveling extensively, allowed

her to understand the busy schedules of AKA board members. White recalls planning with the AKA national board and program chairs during the first months of her presidency. She explains AKA's organizational structure, its budget and the impact of improvements in technology on the organization. As national president, White implemented the Young Authors Program, which published stories written by children in kindergarten through third grade, and the Ivy Reading AKAdemy, which collected data on the impact of AKA's one-to-one tutoring program.