

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Geraldine D. Brownlee

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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>	Brownlee, Geraldine Daniels, 1925-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Geraldine D. Brownlee,
<b>Dates:</b>	December 17, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:26:56).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Education professor Geraldine D. Brownlee (1925 - ) has taught for many years at the University of Illinois Chicago. Brownlee was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 17, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_302
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Geraldine Brownlee has spent most of her life as an educator. Born in East Chicago, Indiana, Brownlee's father was a skilled worker for Inland Steel and both her mother and her stepmother were homemakers. Brownlee attended West Virginia State College, where she graduated cum laude in 1947 with degrees in biology and Spanish. Brownlee earned an M.S.T. in urban education from the University of Chicago in 1967, and completed her Ph.D. there in 1975. She also spent time at both the University of Illinois and the University of Michigan graduate schools of social work.

In 1947, Brownlee took a job with the Cook County Department of Public

Welfare, where she worked as a caseworker from 1948 until 1955 when she began a career in teaching. She taught elementary school for eleven years in the Chicago public schools. From 1967 until 1970, Brownlee worked with the University of Chicago graduate school of education as a staff associate, becoming assistant director of teacher training in 1970. The following year, Brownlee was made an assistant professor and assistant dean of student services in the University of Illinois-Chicago (UIC) College of Education. During 1975-1976, Brownlee served as director of Title VII desegregation projects for Illinois School District 163. She continued as an assistant professor with UIC until her retirement in 1990, teaching curriculum and instruction within the school of education to both undergraduate and graduate students. During that time, she worked as a visiting professor to Indiana University Northwest and was active evaluating programs within the Chicago public school system. In 1995, Brownlee became a consultant to the Center for Urban Education at DePaul University in Chicago, where she remained for a year.

Brownlee has been the recipient of numerous awards throughout her career. She has also been active both in professional and civic organizations. Some of her honors include the 1990 YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago Outstanding Achievement Award in the field of education; selection as a member of the Chicago Presbyterian Delegation to Cuba in 1998; and election as a commissioner to the 2000 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of America. She has served on the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago Board of Directors, the Chicago Urban League Education Advisory Committee and Links, Inc. Brownlee and her husband Brady live in Chicago.

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## **Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Geraldine D. Brownlee was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 17, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Education professor Geraldine D. Brownlee (1925 - ) has taught for many years at the University of Illinois Chicago.

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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:

Brownlee, Geraldine Daniels, 1925-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Brownlee, Geraldine Daniels, 1925---Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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University of Illinois at Chicago. College of Education

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## **Occupations:**

Education Professor

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

EducationMakers

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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 Geraldine D. Brownlee, December 17, 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 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 Geraldine D. Brownlee, Section A2003\_302\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:40 2003/12/17

Geraldine D. Brownlee was born on April 13, 1925 in East Chicago, Indiana. Her mother, Nellie Roberta Cossey Daniels, was born in 1902 in Barbour County, Alabama. Her father owned enough land to be able to pay the poll tax to vote. Daniels attended Tuskegee University and died in 1933. Brownlee's father, Jerry Daniels, was born in 1902 in Barbour County. He attended the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois and became a pastor at Tabernacle Baptist Church in East Chicago, Indiana. He also worked for Inland Steel Company, was a member of the Masons and was a charismatic leader. Brownlee's father married her stepmother, Nancy Jane Calhoun, in 1935. Calhoun was born in 1902 in Gunnison, Mississippi. Brownlee grew up in a working-class Eastern European neighborhood in East Chicago. Though the neighborhood was not far from downtown, it bordered the prairie; she recalls both the sounds of the prairie and more urban sounds of train horns and streetcars. Brownlee's childhood home encouraged reading and music.

Video Oral History Interview with Geraldine D. Brownlee, Section A2003\_302\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:11 2003/12/17

Geraldine D. Brownlee attended Benjamin Franklin Elementary School in East Chicago, Indiana where she had good teachers and enjoyed all the subjects she learned. However, there were few black students and she fought one girl who called her racist names. While attending George Washington High School, two teachers kept Brownlee from entering the National Honor Society because she had spoken out against discrimination directed at the all-black Robeson Glee Club. These

negative experiences led Brownlee to seek out a historically black college. After graduating from high school in 1943, she matriculated at West Virginia State College in Institute, West Virginia. There she encountered supportive faculty members, such as Dr. Herman Canady who recognized her intelligence and allowed her to take extra courses. She majored in Spanish and biology and worked as a lab assistant. On campus she was president of her sophomore class, editor-in-chief of the school newspaper and on the debating and women's basketball teams.

Video Oral History Interview with Geraldine D. Brownlee, Section A2003\_302\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:50 2003/12/17

Geraldine D. Brownlee was encouraged to attend a historically black college as a child. She attended West Virginia State College during World War II. While there, she heard interesting speakers, including Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Mary McLeod Bethune, and Robert Lee Vann, and encountered new ideas like Quakerism. After college, Brownlee moved to Chicago, Illinois and worked for the Cook County Welfare Department. She received a scholarship to a summer training program in administering to the blind at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. She declined a job offer from the W.C. Handy Foundation, which offered services for people who were visually handicapped, and continued working as a social worker in Chicago. Brownlee began teaching and eventually taught at the Kozminski Community Academy in Hyde Park. After being frustrated by the challenges facing urban teachers, she earned her M.S.T. and Ph.D. from the University of Chicago where she studied urban teacher leadership and curriculum development.

Video Oral History Interview with Geraldine D. Brownlee, Section A2003\_302\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:10 2003/12/17

Geraldine D. Brownlee pursued her doctorate degree at the University of Chicago in Chicago, Illinois where she completed research on urban teacher leadership. She was influenced by the work of her cousin HistoryMaker Dr. James Comer, who advocated for a holistic approach in understanding and working with children. Brownlee was able to use her academic training to advance the

educational and social work of several community organizations, including the Chicago Urban League, the YWCA Metropolitan Chicago and the Links, Inc. She joined the faculty of the University of Illinois at Chicago, where she worked with a diverse urban student population and chaired the Chancellor's Committee on the Status of Blacks (CCSB). She met HistoryMaker Dr. Maurice F. Rabb through her work with CCSB. Brownlee served as a principal evaluator for the Chicago Public School system's dropout program and Hispanic truant program and was the director of a Title VII desegregation program in Park Forest, Illinois.

Video Oral History Interview with Geraldine D. Brownlee, Section A2003\_302\_001\_005, TRT: 0:31:05 2003/12/17

Geraldine D. Brownlee has always set high expectations for her students throughout her teaching career at both the elementary and college level. She remembers her mentors, many of whom were white males; explains why she turned down a job to lead an affirmative action program; and explains her parents' political orientation. Brownlee describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community and describes how she would like to be remembered. She considers what she would have done differently in her life and reflects upon her legacy. She concludes by narrating her photographs.