



Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Janette Hoston Harris

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Harris, Jannette Hoston
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Janette Hoston Harris,
Dates:	August 10, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	5 Betacam SP videocassettes (1:57:45).
Abstract:	City historian Janette Hoston Harris (1939 -) and six other students were arrested for attempting to desegregate an all-white lunch counter; the arrest resulted in her expulsion from Southern University, and by order of the governor, her being prohibited from attending any college in the state of Louisiana. Harris's case became part of the Supreme Court case, <i>Garner v. Louisiana</i> . Harris went on to become the first city historian for Washington, D.C. Harris was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 10, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_122
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

City historian Dr. Janette Hoston Harris was born on September 7, 1939, in Monroe, Louisiana; her mother, Maud Marrie Hoston, was a homemaker and her father, Eluin Homer Hoston, was a printer and businessman who opened the first shoe store in Louisiana for African Americans, "Hoston's Shoes and Bootery." In 1956, Harris earned her high school diploma from Carroll High School in Monroe, Louisiana, where she was a member of the English and spelling bee clubs and the basketball team. From 1956 until 1960, Harris attended Southern University, where she was active in the Methodist club, a co-founder of Gamma Sigma Sigma sorority, and captain of the drill team. In 1960, during her senior year, Harris and six other students were arrested for attempting to desegregate an all-white lunch counter. The arrest resulted in her expulsion from Southern University and, by order of the governor, her being prohibited from attending any college in the state of Louisiana. Harris completed her education at Central State University in Ohio, where she earned her B.A. degree in psychology in 1962.

While attending Central State in 1960, Harris's case challenging segregation, "*Hoston v. the State of Louisiana*," went to the Louisiana Supreme Court. Harris's case eventually became part of a larger court challenge, "*Garner v. Louisiana*," that was heard by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1961; the case was argued and won by future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall in 1962.

After her graduation, Harris worked in the selection division of the Peace Corps. From 1964 until 1970, Harris had a career in education, teaching second, fourth, fifth and sixth grades in Washington, D.C. public schools.

From 1970 until 1972, Harris worked as a research associate for the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History. Harris earned her master's degree in history in 1972 from Howard University, and her Ph.D. degree in 1975. In 1975, Harris began teaching history at Federal City College, now known as the University of the District of Columbia. That same year she established a consulting firm, JOR Associates. From 1979 until 1980, Harris served as campaign manager for the Carter / Mondale Re-election Campaign. In 1991, Harris was appointed director of educational affairs for Washington, D.C., where she remained for a year. For the next three years, Harris served as director of the Office of Intergovernmental Relations in the Mayor's Office; in 1998, she was appointed city historian for Washington, D.C., the first person to hold the post.

Harris continued to serve as city historian; over the course of her career, she was the recipient of numerous awards for her civic and educational commitment. In 2004, Harris, along with her fellow sit-in students, was invited back to Southern University to receive the degree she was denied in 1960.

Dr. Janette Hoston Harris was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on August 10, 2004.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Janette Hoston Harris was conducted by Racine Tucker Hamilton on August 10, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 5 Betacam SP videocassettes. City historian Janette Hoston Harris (1939 -) and six other students were arrested for attempting to desegregate an all-white lunch counter; the arrest resulted in her expulsion from Southern University, and by order of the governor, her being prohibited from attending any college in the state of Louisiana. Harris's case became part of the Supreme Court case, *Garner v. Louisiana*. Harris went on to become the first city historian for Washington, D.C.

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:

Harris, Janette Hoston, 1939-

Hamilton, Racine Tucker (Interviewer)

Lane, Edgar Carey (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Harris, Janette Hoston, 1939---Interviews

African American historians--Interviews.

African American scholars--Interviews.

African American women civil rights workers--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Washington (D.C.)

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 Janette Hoston Harris, August 10, 2004. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 12/2/2011 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, August 10, 2004

Video Oral History Interview with Janette Hoston Harris, Section A2004_122_001_001, TRT: 0:30:34 2004/08/10

Dr. Janette Hoston Harris was born on September 7, 1939 in Monroe, Louisiana. Maud Marrie Hoston, her mother, was born in 1916 in Monroe, Louisiana. Harris says her mother never worked and was a homemaker and seamstress by trade. Eluin Homer Hoston, Sr. was born in Monroe, Louisiana. Harris says that her father was an activist and community leader. He resented the fact that his wife's very fair skin complexion caused many problems with the community. Harris discusses growing up in Monroe, Louisiana. She compares a typical day in her family home to a holiday with well-decorated French doors and lace table clothes. Harris attended St. James Methodist Church in Monroe, Louisiana and was very active in the youth ministry. She ends the interview segment by describing how she was thrown out of a Woolworth diner frequently because she refused to drink from the "Colored Only" water fountain.

African American families--Louisiana--Monroe.

African American children--Louisiana--Monroe.

African American mothers--Louisiana.

African American fathers--Louisiana.

Louisiana--Social conditions.

African American civil rights activists.

African American neighborhood--Louisiana--Monroe.

African American churches--Louisiana--Monroe.

African American children--Social conditions.

Human skin color--Social aspects.

Video Oral History Interview with Janette Hoston Harris, Section A2004_122_001_002, TRT: 0:30:32 2004/08/10

Dr. Janette Hoston Harris discusses her educational experiences. Harris attended Mount Nebo Elementary School in Monroe, Louisiana. She started school at four years old and acted in many plays. Harris enrolled in Monroe Colored High School in Monroe, Louisiana. In tenth grade, Harris had her first job at a cotton farm. Harris transferred to Carroll High School in Monroe, Louisiana. She was a basketball player and a member of the English club. Harris attended high school during the landmark case of Brown vs. Board of Education in 1954.

She enjoyed her school and did not have any aspirations to transfer to an integrated school. In 1956, Harris attended Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She was a biology major and founder of Gamma Sigma Sigma Service sorority. Harris ends the segment of the interview by talking about the impact of the Greensboro, North Carolina sit-ins on Southern University students.

African Americans--Education (Secondary)--Louisiana--Monroe.

African Americans--Education (Higher)--Louisiana--Baton Rouge.

African American children--Education (Elementary)--Louisiana--Monroe.

African American children--Social life and customs.

African American families--Louisiana--Monroe.

African American neighborhoods--Louisiana--Monroe.

African Americans--Louisiana--Monroe--Social life and customs.

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka.

Southern University and A & M College--Students.

Video Oral History Interview with Janette Hoston Harris, Section A2004_122_001_003, TRT: 0:29:43 2004/08/10

Dr. Janette Hoston Harris led demonstrations as a student at Southern University. On March 28, 1960, Harris and seven students decided to protest segregation in public restaurants by a sit-in at the Kress lunch counter. Harris was escorted out of Kress and driven to jail in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She recalls that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and her attorney Johnny Jones helped to release the students from jail. The students were expelled from school and Harris left Southern University and enrolled in Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio. Harris earned her B.A. in psychology in 1962 and moved to Washington, D.C. to work for the Peace Corps. She enrolled in Howard University for her M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in history. She ends the interview by describing how becoming the director of Education Affairs for the City Council was her most interesting job experience.

Southern University and A & M College--Students.

Civil rights demonstrations--Louisiana.

African American college students.

African Americans--Education (Higher)--Louisiana--Baton Rouge.

African American neighborhoods--Louisiana--Baton Rouge.

African American neighborhoods--Washington (D.C.).

Segregation.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Central State University (Wilberforce, Ohio)--Students.

Howard University--Students.

African American civil rights activists--Louisiana.

Video Oral History Interview with Janette Hoston Harris, Section A2004_122_001_004, TRT: 0:26:56 2004/08/10

Dr. Janette Hoston Harris discusses her career as the city historian of Washington, D.C. She created an exhibit about Mayor Marion Barry at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Public Library in Washington, D.C. Harris shares her main goal as the city historian. She wanted to unearth the history of the Washington, D.C. neighborhood. She describes how she restored the first

local park for African Americans, which is one half block from Carter G. Woodson's home. Harris says that Washington, D.C. history is rooted in the history of African Americans and unless you capture that history you will lose what you were and why you are here on this Earth, and you will be unable to pass the legacy of history down to your children. Harris talks about her thoughts on integration and recalls the racial climate in Louisiana. Harris discusses the importance of history and her hopes for the African American community.

African American educators--Washington (D.C.).

African American mayors--Washington (D.C.).

African American neighborhoods--Washington (D.C.).

African American families--Washington (D.C.).

Barry, Marion, 1936-.

Woodson, Carter Godwin, 1875-1950.

African American businesspeople.

African Americans and libraries.

African American historians.