Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Hannah H. Thomas

Overview of the Collection

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

Creator: Hannah H. Thomas

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Hannah H. Thomas,

Dates: March 15, 2005

Bulk Dates: 2005

Physical Description: 4 Betacam SP videocassettes (1:49:29).

Abstract: Civic activist and elementary school teacher Hannah H. Thomas (1916 - ) was born in
Florence, Alabama on December 25, 1916. She graduated with a Bachelors in Science
from Alabama Agricultural & Mechanical University in 1951 and a Masters in Science
in education from the University of Cincinnati in 1964. Thomas taught school in
Cincinnati for twenty-two years and established the African American Heritage Day
and the Sojourner truth Drama group. She has been the recipient of numerous awards in
1992. Thomas was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 15, 2005, in
Cincinnati, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the
interview.

Identification: A2005_065

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civic activist and elementary school teacher Hannah H. Thomas was born in Florence, Alabama on December 25, 1916. The eighth of ten children, she is the daughter of Evernee Hubbard and Everett N. Hawkins. Thomas graduated from Burrell High School in Florence, Alabama in 1939 and earned her B.S. degree in education from Alabama A & M University in 1951. She later earned her M.S. degree in education from the University of Cincinnati in 1964.

Thomas taught school for more than ten years in Alabama, and was given a Teacher of the Year award in 1956 before she moved to Cincinnati in 1958. She taught in the public schools in Cincinnati for twenty-two years. Although officially retired from teaching, she continues working as an educator. She also founded Cincinnati’s African American Heritage Day and the Sojourner Truth Drama Group.

Thomas has received many awards and honors, including her selection as one of 200 Greater Cincinnatians during the bicentennial in 1988, a Cincinnati Enquirer Woman of the Year Award in 1992, and the Zeta Phi Beta, the Beta Zeta Zeta Chapter, Woman of the Year Award in 1998. Thomas is also listed in America’s Registry of Outstanding Professionals and Who’s Who in the World.

Hannah H. Thomas was interviewed by The HistoryMakers March 15, 2005.
Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Hannah H. Thomas was conducted by Reginnia Williams on March 15, 2005, in Cincinnati, Ohio, and was recorded on 4 Betacam SP videocassettes. Civic activist and elementary school teacher Hannah H. Thomas (1916 - ) was born in Florence, Alabama on December 25, 1916. She graduated with a Bachelors in Science from Alabama Agricultural & Mechanical University in 1951 and a Masters in Science in education from the University of Cincinnati in 1964. Thomas taught school in Cincinnati for twenty-two years and established the African American Heritage Day and the Sojourner truth Drama group. She has been the recipient of numerous awards in 1992.

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:

Thomas, Hannah H.

Williams, Reginnia (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Hannah H. Thomas--Interviews

Organizations:
Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Hannah H. Thomas

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Cincinnati Public Schools

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


Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 8/25/2011 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, March 15, 2005

Video Oral History Interview with Hannah H. Thomas, Section A2005_065_001_001, TRT: 0:28:55 2005/03/15

Hannah Thomas begins the interview by briefly discussing her family background. Both of her parents were sharecroppers and could only go to school through the fifth grade until they moved into the town of Florence,
Alabama. Thomas briefly describes the geographic and demographic make-up of Florence. She discusses her childhood as a sharecropper outside of Florence, Alabama, and details the average day in the life of a sharecropper. She talks about her educational experiences in the Rosenwald School, which her father helped build, and the Burrell Normal School, which was an AMA school, in Florence. After secondary school, she went to Alabama A & M University to earn her bachelors degree in education. She recalls how supportive the faculty was at that school. Thomas also remembers the different WPA programs in Florence, like the Civilian Conservation Corps.

United States. Works Progress Administration.
Depressions—1929—United States.
Alabama A & M University.
Julius Rosenwald Fund—Buildings.
African Americans—Education—Southern States—History—20th century.
American Missionary Association.
Sharecroppers—Southern States.
Sharecropping—Alabama.
Farm life—Southern States.
African American children—Alabama.
African American families—Alabama.

Video Oral History Interview with Hannah H. Thomas, Section A2005_065_001_002, TRT: 0:29:11 2005/03/15

Hannah Thomas continues her discussion about her college experiences and the College of Education’s curriculum at Alabama A & M University. Some of the speakers who came to Alabama A & M’s Founders day included Mary McLeod Bethune. Thomas recalls her decision to move to Cincinnati to pursue her education and reflects on teaching in a small town in Ohio and in Cincinnati. She preferred the small town because the teachers had more opportunity to reach the children. Thomas also talks about her love for history and the different organizations she started. One organization was the Harriet Beecher Stowe Historical and Cultural Association, which was established to preserve an old school building. She is also responsible for establishing the African American Heritage Day, which is supported by the City of Cincinnati.
Bethune, Mary McLeod. 1875-1955.
African American teachers—Alabama.
African American teachers and the community—Ohio—Cincinnati.
Historic preservation—United States.
Alabama A & M University.

Video Oral History Interview with Hannah H. Thomas, Section A2005_065_001_003, TRT: 0:30:01 2005/03/15

Hannah Thomas discusses Cincinnati’s recent history and how the town has healed from the poor race relations of the late 20th century. She talks about the political leadership that has emerged from African American communities, and the role of the NAACP in the community through the years. Thomas remembers Florence, Alabama being self-reliant when she was in high school, and talks about how different educational intitives and rulings, like Brown vs. Board of Education and No Child Left Behind, have affected African American and poor schools. She also discusses some of the losses suffered by the African
American community as a result of integration and the effect that has had on
the recent generations.
Cincinnati (Ohio).
No Child Left Behind Act.
Race relations—Ohio—Cincinnati.
Discrimination in education Law and legislation—United States History.
School integration.
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.
Discrimination in education—Law and legislation—United States—History—
20th century.

Video Oral History Interview with Hannah H. Thomas, Section A2005_065_001_004, TRT:
0:21:22 2005/03/15

Hannah Thomas discusses proficiency testing, and the negative effects of these
types of tests. She states that these tests lower the students’ morale, and causes
anxiety, which results in low test scores. She also talks about her legacy, and
how she hopes the African American community will come together in the next
fifty years. She feels that economic sustainability within the community is the
key to success and improvement. She concludes the interview by narrating
some photographs.

Academic Achievement—United States—Testing.