

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Cora Masters Barry

PERSON

Barry, Cora Masters, 1945-

Alternative Names: Cora Masters Barry;

Life Dates: May 7, 1945-

Place of Birth: Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Residence: Washington, D.C.

Work: Washington, D.C.

Occupations: Civic Leader;

Biographical Note

Civic leader Cora Masters Barry, Chief Executive Officer of the Recreation Wish List Committee, former University of the District of Columbia political science professor and former First Lady of the city of Washington, D.C., was born May 7, 1945 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. She was raised there, along with her three sisters and two brothers, by her mother, Isabell Arch Masters. Masters Barry's mother had separated

from her father, Alfred Masters, when Masters Barry was young. The family moved to Pasadena, California during Masters Barry's teenage years, and after high school she attended California State and Texas Southern universities. Masters Barry moved to Washington, D.C. in 1970, with her then-husband Moses Wilds and her two daughters, to work towards a master's degree at Howard University. In Washington, D.C., Masters Barry began her career with community projects in Anacostia and in Shaw, where she worked as a counselor for teenage girls with Operation Sisters United. She met Marion Barry in 1971 at a political function and in 1976 she began teaching at the University of the District of Columbia. During Barry's bids for city council, and again in 1978, during his successful bid for mayor, Masters Barry campaigned for Marion Barry.

In 1980, Mayor Barry appointed her as the first woman on the three-member D.C. Boxing and Wrestling Commission. She became chairman after her first three-year term, and left the position in 1988.

Masters Barry and Marion Barry were married in 1994 and together they launched his mayoral comeback. Barry was re-elected in 1994 and served until 1998.

After her service as Washington D.C.'s First Lady, Masters Barry started the nonprofit foundation, the Recreation Wish List, serving as its Chief Executive Officer. The organization built the Southeast Tennis and Learning Center where urban youth in Washington, D.C. learn about tennis. Masters Barry and former Mayor Barry divorced in 2003.

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