

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Mildred Bond Roxborough

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Roxborough, Mildred Bond, 1926-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Mildred Bond Roxborough,
Dates:	August 24, 2005 and June 8, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	10 Betacame SP videocassettes (4:44:47).
Abstract:	Association executive Mildred Bond Roxborough (1926 -) served as director of development for the NAACP and continued to work for the New York Bureau of the association long past her retirement. Roxborough was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 24, 2005 and June 8, 2005, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_129
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

NAACP executive Mildred Bond Roxborough was born on June 30, 1926, in Brownsville, Tennessee, one of three daughters of college sweethearts Ollie and Mattye Tollette Bond. Roxborough's family background included a tradition of African American empowerment; her mother's family founded Tollette, Arkansas, which was a post-Reconstruction, all-African American town, while her own parents chartered Brownsville, Tennessee's first chapter of the NAACP. At the age of nine, Roxborough began selling subscriptions to *The Crisis*, the official publication of the NAACP.

Roxborough and her family moved to Kansas City after her father's involvement in civil rights activities forced her family to leave Tennessee; it was there that she graduated from Charles Sumner High School in 1943. Roxborough worked towards her college undergraduate degree at Howard University and Washington Square College of New York University, finishing in 1947; she received her M.A degree from Columbia University in 1953, and attended the University of Paris extension at Marseilles and the University of Mexico at Cuernavaca.

Roxborough's career at the NAACP began with her position as national staff field secretary in 1954; she became the executive assistant and the administrative assistant to executive director in 1963, and in 1975, she became assistant director. Between 1978 and 1984, Roxborough became director of operations for the NAACP. Between 1984 and 1986, Roxborough moved up to become director of programs; she was the first woman to serve the organization in that role. Roxborough served as director of development from 1986 until her retirement in 1997. Despite her retirement, Roxborough, a mainstay of the organization, remained intimately involved with the planning and core operations of the annual NAACP National Convention and the organization's New York Bureau.

In addition to her service to and lifetime membership in the NAACP, Roxborough served as vice chairman of Intergroup Corporation, and on the boards of America's Charities and Morningside Retirement and Health, Incorporated. Roxborough's honors and awards included the James Weldon Johnson Medal; the Medgar Wiley Evers Award; and America's Charities Distinguished Service Award.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Mildred Bond Roxborough was conducted by Larry Crowe and Shawn Wilson on August 24, 2005 and June 8, 2005, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 10 Betacame SP videocassettes. Association executive Mildred Bond Roxborough (1926 -) served as director of development for the NAACP and continued to work for the New York Bureau of the association long past her retirement.

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:

Roxborough, Mildred Bond, 1926-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

(Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Roxborough, Mildred Bond, 1926---Interviews

African American women civil rights workers--Interviews

African American women civic leaders--Interviews

African American civil rights workers--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Occupations:

Association Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakersI

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 Mildred Bond Roxborough, August 24, 2005 and June 8, 2005. 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).

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

Video Oral History Interview with Mildred Bond Roxborough, Section A2005_129_001_001, TRT: 0:29:16 2005/06/08

Mildred Bond Roxborough was born on June 30, 1926 in Brownsville, Tennessee to Mattye Tollette Bond and Ollie Bond. Her mother was born in 1895 in Tollette, Arkansas, which was founded by her father, Sanford Tollette. Her father's father was an African enslaved near Shreveport, Louisiana, who bought his freedom and the original five hundred acres that later became Tollette. The town was incorporated when Sanford Tollette established a post office. Roxborough's father grew up in Brownsville, Tennessee. He had white, black, and Cherokee ancestry. His grandfather, a brickmason, built the county courthouse and his father was the county sheriff during Reconstruction. Roxborough's parents met at Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee. Her mother studied math and English and later became a teacher. Her father

volunteered to serve in the U.S. army during World War I so that his brothers would not be drafted. He reached the rank of master sergeant before he returned to his wife in Brownsville to start their family.

African American women civil rights workers--Interviews.

African American women civic leaders--Interviews.

African American civil rights workers--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Mildred Bond Roxborough, Section A2005_129_001_002, TRT: 0:29:56 2005/06/08

Mildred Bond Roxborough's parents met in Latin class at Lane College. Her parents taught, and her father later was assistant principal, at Haywood County Training School in Brownsville, Tennessee, where Roxborough and her two sisters were raised. When the local black undertaker died, her father took over the funeral home, and Roxborough was once scared by a corpse appearing to sit up due to rigor mortis. Many in the community who lacked education depended on Roxborough's parents for legal help. When she was eight, her parents organized a branch of the NAACP. At first, the white community, unaware of its civil rights bent, welcomed the organization. Once her parents began pushing for voting rights, though, NAACP members faced threats and economic reprisals from whites, and some members of the black community supported the backlash as well. Roxborough's mother was fired from her job by a cousin who disagreed with their activism, and Roxborough saw her father beaten by police. Later, his life was threatened.

Video Oral History Interview with Mildred Bond Roxborough, Section A2005_129_001_003, TRT: 0:29:21 2005/06/08

Mildred Bond Roxborough attended Haywood County Training School in Brownsville, Tennessee. Her father, a local NAACP leader, had to flee after a fire destroying their home was suspected to be arson, and he was warned of an attempt planned on his life. He did not return to his hometown until the day of his funeral. Roxborough's family moved to Kansas City, Kansas, where she attended Northeast Junior High School and Sumner High School. She graduated with honors in 1943 at the age of fifteen. At

Howard University in Washington, D.C., she was taught by Alain Locke and Sterling Allen Brown. In keeping with family tradition, she pledged Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, though she did not enjoy it. In 1945, she transferred to New York University and stayed in Harlem with her sister, who was employed at Pepsi Cola. Roxborough was recruited to the NAACP while a graduate student at Columbia University in New York. Her first task was to assist Grace Nail Johnson, which entailed accompanying her to lunch at La Caravelle.

Video Oral History Interview with Mildred Bond Roxborough, Section A2005_129_001_004, TRT: 0:30:14 2005/06/08

Mildred Bond Roxborough was recruited to join the NAACP by Gloster B. Current as she was about to begin a Ph.D. at Columbia University in New York, New York. Assigned to be a membership campaign organizer in Baltimore, Maryland, Roxborough spent three months working under civil rights leader Dr. Lillie May Carroll Jackson, who was known as a difficult supervisor. Though asked to return the following year, Roxborough turned down the offer to instead work in Washington, D.C. under Eugene A. Davidson. Then, she organized the first Freedom Fund Dinner in Detroit, Michigan. Following the Brown v. Board of Education ruling in 1954, Roxborough, upon Thurgood Marshall's recommendation, was sent to black families in Hoxie, Arkansas, the first school district to voluntarily integrate. On her way to Hoxie, she was kicked off a bus for refusing to give up her seat to a white couple. When she arrived, she worked with Daisy Bates to advocate for integrating districts across the state and to support the Little Rock Nine.

Video Oral History Interview with Mildred Bond Roxborough, Section A2005_129_001_005, TRT: 0:29:57 2005/06/08

Mildred Bond Roxborough organized NAACP community meetings in Arkansas following the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education ruling. She was impressed by the dedication of the attendees, many of whom were illiterate farmers trying to better their children's education. Once after traveling, Roxborough became stuck in her host's washtub and had to be removed from it in the yard in front of townspeople prior to a meeting. She and Medgar Evers

interviewed farmers in Mississippi to collect reports of financial discrimination. In Benton Harbor, Michigan, she worked with attorneys Hobart Taylor, Jr. and HistoryMaker The Honorable Damon J. Keith. As a young woman fieldworker, Roxborough experienced sexual harassment at the hands of NAACP volunteers, which was tricky to navigate given the need to maintain good relationships with them. In 1963, she married John W. Roxborough, chair of the legal redress committee. Roxborough talks about the NAACP's position on violence and on self-defense, and the NAACP Youth Council.

Video Oral History Interview with Mildred Bond Roxborough, Section A2005_129_002_006, TRT: 0:29:47 2005/08/24

Mildred Bond Roxborough was working with the NAACP in the 1950s when Reverend George Lee, Gus Courts and other activists were assassinated in Mississippi. The effort to increase voter registration, prompted by the opening of primary elections to black voters in 1948, sparked violent backlash. In Benton Harbor, Michigan, she assisted the community in their fight to remain in integrated schools. As a field secretary, she led membership campaigns, fundraising efforts, and organized conferences and workshops. She worked with many strong women, including Lucille Black, Daisy Lampkin and L. Pearl Mitchell, who served as the backbone of the NAACP. In the mid-1950s, Roxborough met attorney John W. Roxborough in Detroit, Michigan. After becoming reacquainted in Washington D.C., where he worked at the U.S. Department of State, they married in 1963. Roxborough talks about the NAACP's role in school desegregation and public accommodations reform, as well as their relationship with the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

Video Oral History Interview with Mildred Bond Roxborough, Section A2005_129_002_007, TRT: 0:29:08 2005/08/24

Video Oral History Interview with Mildred Bond Roxborough, Section A2005_129_002_008, TRT: 0:29:30 2005/08/24

Mildred Bond Roxborough worked for the NAACP for fifty years. Throughout that time, she saw the organization

withstand many assaults, including when it was outlawed in Alabama and Georgia and losing its case of NAACP v. Claiborne Hardware Co. in 1982. In responding to some African Americans' nostalgia for the era of segregated schools, Roxborough acknowledges that the concentrated supply of highly qualified African American teachers was lost, but notes the need to improve current educational conditions. She gives her opinion on the changes in the Democratic Party since the days of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. She also explains the importance of history and the NAACP's history in particular, noting how it provided an organizational model for other social movements, including the women's movement of the 1970s. Roxborough describes the accomplishments of her husband's sons whom she helped raise. She also reflects upon her concerns for the future.

Video Oral History Interview with Mildred Bond Roxborough, Section A2005_129_002_009, TRT: 0:30:48 2005/08/24

Mildred Bond Roxborough recounts the history of the NAACP, from its founding in 1909 by a group of African American ministers and white suffragists to the 2005 presidential appointment of Bruce S. Gordon. In tracing this history, she describes those that have headed the organization previously and the leadership changes throughout the past century. She explains how James Weldon Johnson was the first African American to be appointed executive secretary, the title then given to the organization's head, and talks about recent leaders, including HistoryMaker Reverend Benjamin Hooks and HistoryMaker Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr. She also describes the organizational structure of the NAACP, noting how its various conferences serve to bring members together from across the country. Roxborough reflects upon her father's principles, her hopes for the African American community, her work in training and mentoring incoming NAACP staff and her legacy, which she hopes will be for a job well done.

Video Oral History Interview with Mildred Bond Roxborough, Section A2005_129_002_010, TRT: 0:16:50 2005/08/24

Mildred Bond Roxborough and the NAACP supported HistoryMaker The Honorable Andrew Young when he

was being pressured to resign as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. The NAACP, after convening a meeting of national black leaders at its headquarters, decided to publicly support Young. Though reluctant at first, Roxborough was convinced to participate in The HistoryMakers' oral history project by former coworker and HistoryMaker Paul Brock. She explains the decision process for appointing businessman Gordon S. Parks as executive director and CEO of the NAACP in 2005. Roxborough concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.