

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Constance Jackson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Jackson, Constance, 1960-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Constance Jackson,
Dates:	August 3, 2005 and June 23, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	9 Betacame SP videocassettes (4:24:31).
Abstract:	City commissioner and minister Reverend Constance Jackson (1960 -) was a city legislator for District One of Texas City, TX Jackson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 3, 2005 and June 23, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_147
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Ordained minister and former City Commissioner for District One of Texas City, Texas Constance Jenell Jackson was born on September 9, 1960 in Wharton, Texas. Jackson comes from a family filled with ministers. Her paternal great-great grandfather, maternal great grandfather, grandfather, and uncle were all ministers. She is one of five children by the late Lewis B. Jackson, Sr., an educator and football coach, and Sweetie Beatrice Crawford Jackson, a retired mental health administrator. Jackson grew up in Pledger, Texas and attended Newgulf Elementary School, Iago Junior High, and graduated from Boling High School in 1979. She attended the University of Texas at Austin and earned a B.A. degree in government.

During Jackson's first semester at the University of Texas at Austin, she majored in pharmacy, but in her second semester, she changed her major to government when she discovered that Barbara Jordan was teaching at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs. She would subsequently secure an internship at the LBJ School, where she would be mentored by the late congresswoman. During Jackson's childhood, Barbara Jordan's uncle served as pastor of her church. After college and with her government degree, Jackson became involved in politics. In 1983, Jackson served as Texas Democratic Party's assistant primary director and also served as fund-raising executive for Texas Commissioner Garry Mauro. In 1984, Jackson became Capitol Administrator to Texas State Senator Chet Brooks at the State Capitol in Austin, Texas. In 1990, Jackson was promoted to District Administrator by Brooks to oversee his Harris and Galveston County district offices. Jackson worked for Senator Brooks for ten years in these capacities. In 1992, Jackson won a citywide election and became City Commissioner for District One of Texas City, Texas, making her the first African American woman ever elected to a city council position in the entire history of Galveston County.

In addition to her work as city commissioner of District One, Jackson served on the board of the Galveston County American Red Cross and started and supervised the Legislative Internship Program under the auspices of State Senator Chet Brooks.

In 1995, Jackson was involved in a nearly fatal car accident that changed the course of her life. In 1996, she was called to the ministry and in 2001 began her seminary matriculation at the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta, Georgia.

She served five terms as city commissioner and, in 2002, she retired from this position and became a full-time minister.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reverend Constance Jackson was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 3, 2005 and June 23, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 9 Betacame SP videocassettes. City commissioner and minister Reverend Constance Jackson (1960 -) was a city legislator for District One of Texas City, TX

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:

Jackson, Constance, 1960-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Jackson, Constance, 1960---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Texas City, Texas

Occupations:

City Commissioner

Minister

HistoryMakers® Category:

PoliticalMakers|CivicMakers|ReligionMakers

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 Reverend Constance Jackson, August 3, 2005 and June 23, 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 Reverend Constance Jackson, Section A2005_147_001_001, TRT: 0:28:30 2005/06/23

Reverend Constance Jackson was born on September 9, 1960 in Wharton, Texas to Sweetie Crawford Jackson and Lewis B. Jackson, Sr. Her mother was born in 1929 in Cuero, Texas and moved to San Antonio, Texas so she could finish school at Phillis Wheatley High School. Jackson's father was born in 1921 in Pledger, Texas. From the early 1800s, his family owned land that once belonged to a slave owner, who married one of Jackson's ancestors and bequeathed the land to their children. Jackson's father attended Prairie View State Normal and Industrial College of Texas and became a teacher. He left his position after schools were ordered to integrate in 1954. Jackson's parents met during her father's U.S. Army service in San Antonio, Texas and were married in 1959. They had five children and raised them on the outskirts of Pledger, Texas on the Jackson family property near Farm to Market Road 1301. As a girl, Jackson often went on road trips to San Antonio with her family.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Constance Jackson, Section A2005_147_001_002, TRT: 0:29:30 2005/06/23

Reverend Constance Jackson grew up in Pledger, Texas. She recalls being ostracized by some members of the

African American community because her family owned land and emphasized education. Jackson's father emphasized giving back to the community. They allowed pick-up ball games on their land, and hired local citizens as farmhands. In San Antonio, Texas, her family saw blaxploitation films like 'Three the Hard Way' at the all-black Majestic Theatre. Jackson attended Newgulf Elementary School in Newgulf, Texas. She recalls staying home from school to watch Dr. King's funeral with her family. Jackson first noticed racial tension in Pledger when African American students from a nearby district were bussed to Iago Junior High School in Iago, Texas, where Jackson was enrolled. At Boling High School in Boling, Texas, Jackson became the first African American National Honor Society president. She played trombone and served as student director of the marching band, which performed during Friday night football games.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Constance Jackson, Section A2005_147_001_003, TRT: 0:29:20 2005/06/23

Reverend Constance Jackson was baptized when she was eight years old in Caney Creek behind her family's property in Pledger, Texas. She originally wanted to become a member of her church in order to receive communion, but in hindsight Jackson believes this is when she first got her calling to ministry. Jackson also talks about how the African American church has changed since the 1960s and 1970s and the need for moral leadership. At Boling High School in Boling, Texas, Jackson's white peers elected her National Honor Society president in protest of discriminatory treatment she received from the club sponsor. In 1979, Jackson earned an academic scholarship to the University of Texas at Austin, and when she learned that Barbara Jordan was hired as an ethics professor at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, she changed her major from pharmacy to government. Jordan became Jackson's mentor, advising her to never say in private something she would not say in public.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Constance Jackson, Section A2005_147_001_004, TRT: 0:29:31 2005/06/23

Reverend Constance Jackson left the University of Texas

at Austin in 1983 to work as a fundraising executive secretary for Garry Mauro's campaign for Texas land commissioner. After Mauro was elected, Jackson was hired as the assistant primary director for the Texas Democratic Party. In 1984, she joined the administrative staff of Texas Senator Chet Brooks upon the recommendation of Brooks' budget officer, Ken Meters, who worked with Jackson on Garry Mauro's campaign. In 1990, Brooks ran for reelection against Texas State Representative Lloyd Criss, whose campaign claimed that Brooks had not hired any African American staff. Before a vote to endorse Criss at a joint NAACP and AFL-CIO meeting, Jackson gave a speech revealing the claim to be a lie; she received death threats in response. Jackson describes the personality of her mentor Barbara Jordan. She also talks about the differing standards to which politicians are held based upon race and gender.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Constance Jackson, Section A2005_147_001_005, TRT: 0:29:30 2005/06/23

Reverend Constance Jackson remembers her friend Wayne Johnson, a former assistant attorney general for the State of Texas who became the first African American county commissioner for La Marque, Texas since the Reconstruction era. He was a major political ally throughout Jackson's career. After Chet Brooks was reelected Texas State Senator in 1990, Brooks and Johnson convinced Jackson to run the senator's district office in Texas City, Texas, close to her parents' home. Jackson opened the office in 1990, just as she learned her father was terminally ill. He passed away in 1991. Jackson was approached by local labor representatives, who asked her to run for a commissioner's seat in Texas City. She was elected in 1992. At the request of youth softball program manager Donald Singleton, Jackson forced the city to remove garbage from the streets, to repair potholes, and to clean up Carver Park's dilapidated pond in Texas City's African American neighborhood.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Constance Jackson, Section A2005_147_001_006, TRT: 0:29:00 2005/06/23

Reverend Constance Jackson founded the Texas City's Carver Park Juneteenth Celebration in 1995. By 1998,

what began as a small community gathering grew into a large gospel festival featuring Dorothy Norwood and sponsored by Anheuser-Busch. Excess funds were donated to the Carver Park softball association to build score boards, restrooms, and a concession stand. A local oil refinery donated money for the remodel, after Jackson agreed to consider voting for the company to receive a tax rebate in three years. Jackson also confronted local gang members, pressuring them to move away from the remodeled park. During her commissionership, Jackson was called to become a minister; she gave her first sermon in 1996 and became an associate pastor. In 2002, she retired from politics to attend the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta Georgia. Jackson shares her views on the theology and practice of Christianity.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Constance Jackson, Section A2005_147_002_007, TRT: 0:30:50 2005/08/03

Reverend Constance Jackson matriculated at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia in 2001. She commuted between Atlanta, Georgia and Texas City, Texas until her term as a Texas City commissioner ended in 2002. She was then a full time student until her graduation in 2005. Jackson describes how her faith and ministry were influenced by African American theologians like HistoryMaker James H. Cone, who preached that God is on the side of the oppressed, and Dr. Marsha Snulligan-Haney, a professor at the Interdenominational Theological Center who taught missiology, the study of religious missions. Jackson talks about black theology, reflecting upon how race and gender affect how the Bible is interpreted, as well as how the African American church changed following the Civil Rights Movement. She talks about the challenges she has encountered as a preacher and a minister in the contemporary church.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Constance Jackson, Section A2005_147_002_008, TRT: 0:29:10 2005/08/03

Reverend Constance Jackson graduated from the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia in April of 2005. At the time of the interview, Jackson served as an associate minister under pastor

Reverend Dr. Cynthia L. Hale at Ray of Hope Christian Church in Atlanta. She reflects upon the importance of identifying a black presence in the Bible, stating that those who have been excluded from the church can be empowered by knowledge of figures like Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. She also talks about black spirituality found in other religions, such as Nation of Islam, and explains why such alternatives to Christianity are appealing to the African American community. Jackson shares her opinion on the incorporation of African spirituality into Christian church services, stating that moral lessons from Africa should accompany the use of African symbols.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Constance Jackson, Section A2005_147_002_009, TRT: 0:29:10 2005/08/03

Reverend Constance Jackson was preparing accompany Bishop Sarah Davis of Atlanta, Georgia on a missionary trip to Lesotho at the time of the interview. She planned to assess local needs and to initiate economic and community development projects. Jackson talks about the history of Christian missions to Africa and expresses her belief that missionary work should empower communities rather than impose Western cultural practices. Jackson also talks about the role of women in the African American church, the importance of role models for young ministers, and the size of church communities. She reflects upon her hopes and concerns for the African American community, her life, and how she would like to be remembered. Jackson concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.