

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Barbara L. Thomas

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Thomas, Barbara L., 1947-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Barbara L. Thomas,
<b>Dates:</b>	July 21, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:31:13).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Association executive and broadcast executive Barbara L. Thomas (1947 - ) was appointed president of the National Black Master of Business Administration Association in 2003. Thomas was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 21, 2005, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_169
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Barbara Louise Thomas was the president and CEO of the Chicago based National Black Master of Business Administration Association (NBMBAA). Thomas was born on December 5, 1947, in Dublin, Georgia, one of Jerrie Lee Tart and Horace Sanders's thirteen children. Thomas was raised by foster parents Georgia and George Monroe in Dublin, where she attended segregated public schools and graduated from Oconee High School. In 1965, Thomas moved to New York City with her birth mother and took a job at Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited - Associated Community Teams (HARYOU-ACT) where she met her husband. Thomas went on to receive her B.A. degree from New York's Bernard Baruch

College in 1970 and her M.B.A. degree from Columbia University in 1973.

While a university student, Thomas clerked at CBS's Radio Division. After completing her education, Thomas moved into the CBS television division and managed network cut-ins, a position she credits with opening the door to her twenty-five year career at CBS. Eventually Thomas was the first African American woman to attend CBS's School of Management. Thomas later became director of finance and administration for CBS, and left the network in 1989 after serving as the first African American woman to act as a senior vice-president.

Moving on from CBS to function as chief financial officer for various health care organizations and other non-profit groups, Thomas moved to Chicago in 2001 and spent two years as the chief financial officer for the NMBBAA. The board of directors of the NMBBAA appointed Thomas as president in 2003. Citing her faith as a major sustaining force in her life, Thomas remained active in her church. Thomas raised two daughters and had five grandchildren.

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## **Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Barbara L. Thomas was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 21, 2005, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Association executive and broadcast executive Barbara L. Thomas (1947 - ) was appointed president of the National Black Master of Business Administration Association in 2003.

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## **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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Thomas, Barbara L., 1947-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Thomas, Barbara L., 1947---Interviews

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African American women executives--Interviews

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African American businesspeople--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## Occupations:

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Broadcast Chief Executive

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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## 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 Barbara L. Thomas, July 21, 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara L. Thomas, Section  
A2005\_169\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:10 2005/07/22

Barbara L. Thomas was born on December 5, 1947 in Dublin, Georgia to Jerrie Tart Sanders and Horace Sanders. Thomas' maternal great-grandfather was enslaved. Thomas' mother was born in 1920 in Milledgeville, Georgia and mainly worked as a domestic. Thomas' father was born in 1919 in Fort Valley, Georgia to an East Indian father and a mother of African American and white heritage. An entrepreneur, Sanders owned several gas stations and taxi services. Thomas was one of thirteen children, so she was raised by foster parents, George and Georgia Monroe, who were farmers in Dublin. She was reunited with her birth parents at the age of fifteen, but she stayed with her foster parents until she was seventeen. Raised in a strict and religious household, Thomas was urged to achieve greatness. At Susie Dasher Elementary and Oconee High School, she was mentored by two of her teachers, Nellie Coleman and Marine Bacote. Thomas excelled in science, and her speed at typing landed her an office job as a high school student.

African American women executives--Interviews.

African American businesspeople--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara L. Thomas, Section  
A2005\_169\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:10 2005/07/22

Barbara L. Thomas enjoyed her time at Oconee High School in Dublin, Georgia. While chores kept her from joining many extracurricular activities, she was a member of the library club and was chosen to ride the homecoming float one year. Thomas participated in some civil rights protests. She was caught drinking from a white fountain in a department store, and was jailed once for sitting down in

a drugstore. After graduating in 1965, Thomas moved to New York City with her mother, Jerrie Tart Sanders, and began working for the community organization HARYOU-ACT. She attended The City College of New York before landing a job in CBS's radio division. While at CBS, Thomas earned her B.S. degree in finance from Bernard M. Baruch College of the City University of New York and her M.B.A. degree from Columbia University in 1973. During her twenty-five years at CBS, Thomas rose to director of finance and administration and retired as senior vice president. Thomas also recounts marrying her husband in 1967.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara L. Thomas, Section  
A2005\_169\_001\_003, TRT: 0:31:13 2005/07/22

Barbara L. Thomas was the first African American woman to attend the CBS School of Management in 1973. Upon completing her management training, Thomas served as senior vice president of finances for Boston's CBS radio division until her retirement in 1989. Out of a desire to return to the community work she did with HARYOU-ACT, Thomas became the chief financial officer for several health centers and community organizations, including the Dimock Community Health Center. In 2001, Thomas was named the chief financial officer for the National Black MBA Association in Chicago. The NBMBAA was formed in 1968 to unite black M.B.A. students. At the time of the interview, the NBMBAA had one of the nation's largest conferences, and Thomas planned to expand the organization. Thomas talks about her church membership, her family, and the prospects for young black M.B.A. graduates. She reflects upon her hopes and concerns for the African American community, her life and legacy, and how she hopes to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara L. Thomas, Section  
A2005\_169\_001\_004, TRT: 0:01:40 2005/07/22

Barbara L. Thomas describes how she would like to be remembered.