

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Peyton Williams, Jr.

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Williams, Peyton, 1942-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Peyton Williams, Jr.,
Dates:	August 2, 2005 and August 23, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:25:58).
Abstract:	State education administrator Peyton Williams, Jr. (1942 - 2011) was the first African American appointed as Assistant Georgia State Superintendent of Schools, Office of Special Activities. Williams later became Georgia's Associate State Superintendent of Schools, Office of State Schools and Public Libraries and Deputy Georgia State School Superintendent for External Affairs. Williams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 2, 2005 and August 23, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_179
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Educator, Dr. Peyton Williams, Jr. was born April 10, 1942 in the black "Happy Hill" community of Cochran, Georgia. The son of Reverend Peyton Williams and Georgia Reddick Williams, he attended Cochran Colored High School, the school that his father led the movement to build. He graduated in 1960. Williams earned his B.S. degree in education from Fort Valley State College in 1964, the M. Ed. degree from Tuskegee Institute in 1968, the Ed. S. degree from the University of Georgia in 1977 and the Ph.D. degree from Georgia State University in 1982.

Williams became assistant principal of Central High School in Sylvania, Georgia in 1964 and principal of Central Elementary School in 1968. From 1965 to 1969, he was coordinator and teacher of evening classes for adult basic education for the Screven County Schools. From 1970 to 1977, Williams served as principal of Central Middle School, the first integrated school in Screven County. The school was cited for its model disciplinary policies by the *Christian Science Monitor*. Williams was the first black appointed Assistant Georgia State Superintendent of Schools, Office of Special Activities in 1977. In 1978, Williams became Georgia's Associate State Superintendent of Schools, Office of State Schools and Public Libraries. He also directed and managed two state operated schools for hearing and visually impaired students. In 1987, Williams was appointed Associate State Superintendent of Schools and directed the administration of school improvement programs and testing programs. In 1995, he became Deputy Georgia State School Superintendent for External Affairs. In 1995, Williams was appointed by Governor Zell Miller as co-facilitator of the Georgia P-16 Initiative, a statewide effort to raise expectations and ensure student success. Williams served as the highest-ranking African American in the Georgia Department of Education for twenty-five years, from 1977 until his retirement in 2002.

Williams is a recipient of the Governor's Award for outstanding service in state government in the state of Georgia. In 2002, he was installed as president and education consultant of the Association for Supervision and

Curriculum Development International (ASCD), the largest professional organization for educators in the world. Williams also received the Distinguished Service Award for outstanding contributions and leadership to education from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). A highly sought after public speaker, Williams published the monograph, *What It Means To Be A Professional Educator* in 2001. Serving on a number of professional, civic and religious boards, Williams has been a choir director, is a member of the Prince Hall Masons and the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. Williams is currently serving as the Grand Grammateus/Executive Secretary of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity of the Grand Boulé.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Peyton Williams, Jr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 2, 2005 and August 23, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. State education administrator Peyton Williams, Jr. (1942 - 2011) was the first African American appointed as Assistant Georgia State Superintendent of Schools, Office of Special Activities. Williams later became Georgia's Associate State Superintendent of Schools, Office of State Schools and Public Libraries and Deputy Georgia State School Superintendent for External Affairs.

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:

Williams, Peyton, 1942-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Williams, Peyton, 1942- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Georgia. Dept. of Education.

Occupations:

State Education Administrator

HistoryMakers® Category:

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

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Peyton Williams, Jr., August 2, 2005 and August 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 5/30/2023 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 Peyton Williams, Jr., Section A2005_179_001_001, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Peyton Williams, Jr. was born on April 10, 1942 in Cochran, Georgia. His maternal great-great-great-grandmother was a Creek Indian who migrated to Bleckley County from the Tarver Plantation in Twiggs County. His great-grandmother, Clara Tarver, was a free woman of color; his maternal grandmother ran a laundry business and was a member of the Hill family, who were related to Congressman Dudley Mays Hughes' family in Georgia. The first people of color to own property in Cochran, Williams' maternal family founded the Martha Ann Baptist Church in 1868. Born in 1910, his mother, Georgia Reddick Williams, graduated from high school and worked as a cook. His father, Peyton Williams, was born in 1907 to a family of farmers. A pastor for thirty-five years, he was also employed at the Warner Robins Air Force Base, opened a grocery store, and was an agent for Guaranty Life Insurance Company. Williams' parents were married in 1927. He recalls their personalities, his siblings, and his memories of growing up.

Video Oral History Interview with Peyton Williams, Jr., Section A2005_179_001_002, TRT: 0:30:20 ?

Peyton Williams, Jr. grew up in Cochran, Georgia, where his family was the first on their street to buy a television, receive a gas line, and other modern amenities. Although his father was a pastor at Mount Zion Baptist Church, the rest of the family attended the Martha Ann Baptist Church, which was founded by his maternal ancestors. Growing up, Williams played piano for the church choir and listened to the radio show 'Randy's Record Shop.' He recalls his father's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. Williams attended Cochran Colored High School, where he enjoyed history and English, and participated on the school paper and in plays. In 1960, he enrolled at Fort Valley State College, where he majored in education; was influenced by Dr. Mary McCreary, Miss Elaine Douglas, and his dorm mother, Nella Crooks; joined student council and pledged Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. Although aware of the Civil Rights Movement, he limited his political activism while in college.

Video Oral History Interview with Peyton Williams, Jr., Section A2005_179_001_003, TRT: 0:27:40 ?

Peyton Williams, Jr. graduated from Fort Valley State College in 1964, and was offered a job as a teacher and assistant principal at Central High School in Sylvania, Georgia. The school served a mainly rural population where students often came from impoverished backgrounds with limited resources. He recalls the challenges of implementing administrative policy, and the transition away from corporal punishment in schools. Williams spent four summers at Tuskegee Institute, where he earned his M.Ed. degree in 1968. He was then appointed as principal of the elementary school for Central High School. In 1971, following the court-ordered desegregation of Central High School, Williams was appointed as the principal of the integrated Central Middle School. He describes the challenges he faced in the aftermath of school desegregation in Sylvania, including the loss of dedicated African American teachers and parents and faculty who were resistant to integration.

Video Oral History Interview with Peyton Williams, Jr., Section A2005_179_001_004, TRT: 0:27:48 ?

Peyton Williams, Jr. was appointed as the principal of Central Middle School in Sylvania, Georgia, following school desegregation in 1971. He faced challenges in updating curricula to improve student learning in the areas of math, science and reading skills. He recalls Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter's progressive administration and the onset of standardized testing. Williams was the first African American to be appointed assistant state school superintendent for the Georgia Department of Education in 1977. In 1978, Williams became Georgia's associate state superintendent of schools, Office of State Schools and Public Libraries. He also directed and managed two state operated schools for hearing and visually impaired students. In 1984, he became the associate superintendent for curriculum and instruction. He reflects upon the challenges of teaching sex education and evolution in Georgia; the impact of the Internet on learning; and the move to include minority histories in Georgia's public school curriculum.

Video Oral History Interview with Peyton Williams, Jr., Section A2005_179_002_005, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Peyton Williams, Jr. was appointed assistant superintendent in the Office of Instructional Services for the State of Georgia in 1987, and directed the administration of school improvement programs and testing programs. In 1995, he became deputy superintendent of external affairs for the Georgia Department of Education, where he co-facilitated an education reform initiative and oversaw the professional development of school principals. Williams earned his Ph.D. degree from Georgia State University in 1982 and served as the highest-ranking African American in the Georgia Department of Education from 1977 until his retirement in 2002. Williams reflects upon discrepancies in tests and assessments of African American students, changing demographics in Georgia's public schools, preparing students to compete globally, the educational needs of the black community, the African-centered education movement, and the incorporation of African American studies in mainstream curricula.

Video Oral History Interview with Peyton Williams, Jr., Section A2005_179_002_006, TRT: 0:30:20 ?

Peyton Williams, Jr. served as associate superintendent for curriculum and instruction for the Georgia Department of Education. Some of the highlights of his career included the development of a quality core curriculum for Georgia schools and the incorporation of vocational education into the mainstream curriculum. As a member of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), Williams worked on initiatives to address the educational needs of African American students and other minorities. After being elected as ASCD's president in 2002, Williams traveled to countries like England, New Zealand and Israel to consult with educators about how to address the needs of minority students in their schools. Williams reflects upon the educational system in the U.S., education in the rural South, motivating teachers and students and the importance of collaboration between schools and parents for students' educational success. He also critiques the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Video Oral History Interview with Peyton Williams, Jr., Section A2005_179_002_007, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Peyton Williams, Jr. served as president of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development in 2002, and as chairman of the National Dropout Prevention Network. He also served as the Grand Grammateus, or the executive secretary, of the Grand Boulé of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity. Williams reflects upon on the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the changing demography of the state of Georgia, his hopes and concerns for the African American community, his life and legacy and how he would like to be remembered. Williams and his wife,

Sandra Pryor Williams, have two daughters, Rachelle and Tara Williams. He concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.