

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Aurie Pennick

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Pennick, Aurie A., 1947-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Aurie Pennick,
Dates:	September 29, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:20:00).
Abstract:	Foundation chief executive Aurie Pennick (1947 -) is executive director of the Field Foundation. Pennick was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 29, 2005, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_223
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Executive director and treasurer of the Field Foundation of Illinois, Inc., Aurie Alma Pennick was born December 22, 1947 in Chicago, Illinois. Her parents, Aurie Watts and Burrell Baines migrated from Alabama and Mississippi, respectively. Pennick attended William G. Beale Elementary School and graduated from Englewood High School in 1965. At the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), then called the Chicago Circle Campus, Pennick became politically active. She worked for the election of Chicago's first black female alderman, Anna Langford; she worked on voting registration as a civil rights volunteer in Jackson, Mississippi; she was a member of the Friends of the Panthers group and learned African American history from Dr. John Porter's

Englewood School of Human Dignity. By 1970, Pennick was working as a caseworker for the State of Illinois. In 1971, she earned her B.A. degree in the administration of criminal justice from UIC followed by her M.A. degree in the administration of criminal justice in 1981 and a law degree from John Marshall Law School in 1986.

Pennick headed the Chicago Abused Women Coalition, which opened Chicago's first battered women's shelter and Citizens Alert, a criminal justice awareness organization. In 1983, Mayor Harold Washington appointed Pennick to the Chicago Police Board. A participant in the Chicago Community Trust Minority Fellowship Program, Pennick joined the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation as assistant director of Special Grants in 1984. In 1987, Pennick was managing attorney for the Chicago Transit Authority. From 1992 to 2002, she was president and CEO of the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, the nation's oldest fair housing organization. Pennick was chosen as an official U.S. delegate to the Habitat II Global Conference on Cities held in Istanbul, Turkey in 1996. In 2002, she was appointed executive director and CEO of the Chicago- based Field Foundation, which provides support for community, civic and cultural organizations in the Chicago area.

Pennick is a founding board member of the Lake County Community Foundation; a member of the Commercial Club of Chicago, the Economic Club of Chicago and sits on the board of trustees of the Field Museum of Chicago.

Pennick is the recipient of the Harold Washington Award for Distinguished Public Service from the Cook County Bar Association. She also was an Aspen Fellow in 2002 and garnered the Chicago Commission on Human Relations Award in 2003.

The mother of two children, Pennick lives in Grayslake, Illinois.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Aurie Pennick was conducted by Larry Crowe on September 29, 2005, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Foundation chief executive Aurie Pennick (1947 -) is executive director of the Field Foundation.

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:

Pennick, Aurie A., 1947-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Pennick, Aurie A., 1947---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Field Foundation of Illinois.

Occupations:

Foundation Chief Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Aurie Pennick, September 29, 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 Aurie Pennick, Section
A2005_223_001_001, TRT: 0:28:20 2005/09/29

Aurie Pennick was born on December 22, 1947 in Chicago, Illinois to Aurie Watts Baines and Burrell Baines. Her maternal grandmother was the daughter of a freed slave, and her maternal grandfather owned ten acres of land. Pennick's mother was born in a small town in Alabama, and moved to Chicago, Illinois in 1942 to become a beautician. On the train, she met Pennick's father, Burrell Baines, who worked as a Pullman porter. Pennick visited her maternal relatives in Alabama, while, after her father died when she was seven years old, she lost contact with her paternal family. Her mother worked as a beautician and caterer, always taking pride in herself and her work. She was denied a job at the cleaners when the manager refused to believe that she was literate. As a domestic, Pennick's mother showed up well dressed each day before changing into her uniform. Pennick sometimes accompanied her mother to the homes she cleaned and impressed her mother's wealthy employers with her reading and spelling skills.

Video Oral History Interview with Aurie Pennick, Section
A2005_223_001_002, TRT: 0:28:50 2005/09/29

Aurie Pennick joined Bethel Lutheran Church of Englewood when she was eight years old, because Olivet Baptist Church barred children from attending services. Her mother also joined, and became the first woman on the church council, as well as a member of the Order of

the Eastern Star. Pennick's childhood was filled with the smell of her mother's sweet rolls and the sounds of air raid drills at William G. Beale Elementary School. She remembers when the Chicago White Sox won the pennant in 1959, and the city sounded its sirens in celebration. Her neighborhood was home to several theaters, and Pennick remembers the Southtown Theatre hosting the premiere of 'The Ten Commandments.' Englewood was majority white when she moved there, and one of her few African American teachers was especially supportive and encouraging to the black students in her class. Pennick attended Englewood High School in 1961, where she first noticed discrimination based upon skin color within the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Aurie Pennick, Section
A2005_223_001_003, TRT: 0:28:50 2005/09/29

Aurie Pennick's aunt once slapped a white girl who had spit on her, and Pennick's grandmother protected her with a shotgun. At Chicago's Englewood High School, Pennick noticed that a cheerleading coach discriminated between students based upon skin color. During a trip south, she realized for the first time why she was asked to move to the back train car. Upon graduating high school in 1965, she enrolled at the new University of Illinois Chicago Circle campus and married her high school sweetheart. One month later, he was deployed to Vietnam. Pennick explains how the Vietnam War complicated her understanding of the world and why she became more politicized in college. She listened to Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on the radio and considered the value of nonviolence. Reverend John Porter was a good friend of her pastor. Pennick struggled in college, but her mentor Grace Holt found her a tutoring program. Pennick recounts her role model Anna Langford's upset win of the 1971 Chicago City Council election.

Video Oral History Interview with Aurie Pennick, Section
A2005_223_001_004, TRT: 0:29:40 2005/09/29

Aurie Pennick was at Englewood High School when she learned of President John Kennedy's assassination. She remembers Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, and Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley's

order to shoot to kill or maim in the event of riots. After King's death, Pennick began working with Reverend John Porter, teaching African American history at the Englewood School of Human Dignity. She met Mark Clark at University of Illinois at Chicago Circle before he and Fred Hampton were assassinated in 1969. Pennick worked in the South Side offices of Bernard Carey, and recounts the mobilization of African American voters that brought him to office. She continued to be politically involved at UIC, where she was suspended after protesting a professor's use of 'Talley's Corner,' a text that stereotyped African Americans. Pennick graduated in 1971 and became a case worker in Englewood. She talks about the historic city council election of that year, Anna Langford and Chicago's machine politics.

Video Oral History Interview with Aurie Pennick, Section
A2005_223_001_005, TRT: 0:29:30 2005/09/29

Aurie Pennick was a case worker on the North Side of Chicago, Illinois before transferring to an office on the South Side. She describes how the offices' procedures differed. In 1981, she earned a master's degree in criminal justice from University of Illinois at Chicago Circle. Pennick became involved with the Coalition of Concerned Women in the War on Crime, and presented testimony before Carol Moseley Braun and Monica Stewart. As executive director, she worked with Ruth Wells, Ethel Payne, and John Sengstake. For two years, Pennick served as the interim executive director of Citizens Alert, Inc. while earning her law degree from John Marshall Law School. Through the Chicago Community Trust fellowship program, Pennick worked at the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, and later the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. When Harold Washington was elected mayor in 1983, Pennick was appointed to the Chicago Police Board, where she worked alongside Nancy Jefferson, Reverend Wilbur Daniel and David Orr.

Video Oral History Interview with Aurie Pennick, Section
A2005_223_001_006, TRT: 0:28:50 2005/09/29

Aurie Pennick worked with the Chicago Community Trust in 1983 as a fellow for two years, and spent the summer of

her second year in New York City with the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. She then worked at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, where she was the first African American officer. Pennick worked in the Chicago Transit Authority's law department from 1987 the suggestion of Joyce Hughes, who broke the color barrier in the department. From 1992 to 2002, Pennick served as president and CEO of the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities. Pennick describes the organization's Gautreaux Assisted Housing Program and the consequences of overreliance on housing vouchers; she also talks about challenges in the fight for fair housing. When Pennick was asked to give feedback on the creation of Prairie Crossing, a planned community in Grayslake, Illinois, she decided to move in. Upon retiring from the leadership council, Pennick joined the staff of the Field Foundation of Illinois.

Video Oral History Interview with Aurie Pennick, Section
A2005_223_001_007, TRT: 0:26:00 2005/09/29

Aurie Pennick and Doris Jones represented the U.S. as delegates to the Habitat II conference in Istanbul, Turkey in 1995. She traveled to South Africa after Nelson Mandela's election as president and learned about the country's housing conditions. In 2002, Pennick was selected to replace Handy Lindsey, Jr. as executive director and CEO of the Field Foundation of Illinois. She names her favorite projects with the foundation, including the creation of a community development corporation in LeClaire Court and the establishment of an urban public land trust in Humboldt Park. She describes the board and shares that she would like to stay with the foundation until her retirement. Pennick talks about the book 'American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass,' and explains its significance to the history of fair housing. She names her two daughters as her legacy. Pennick also reflects upon her hopes and concerns for the African American community, her life and how she would like to be remembered.