

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Thelma Gibson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Gibson, Thelma Vernell, 1926-2011
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Thelma Gibson,
Dates:	February 16, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:00:23).
Abstract:	City commissioner and nurse Thelma Gibson (1926 - 2011) worked in the city government of Miami, Florida. Gibson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 16, 2006, in Coconut Grove, Florida. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_019
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Thelma Vernell Anderson Gibson was born on December 17, 1926 in Coconut Grove, Florida. She was the sixth of fourteen children born to Sweetlon Counts Albury Anderson and Thomas Theodore Anderson. At that time, Coconut Grove was divided into “Colored Town” and “White Town”. Gibson lived in “Colored Town,” and her parents’ house on Charles Street had no electricity or running water. Gibson graduated in February of 1944 from George Washington Carver High School.

Gibson attended Saint Agnes School of Nursing at Saint Augustine’s College in Raleigh, North Carolina. In August of 1947, she became a registered nurse

specializing in operating techniques. Gibson worked in the “Colored Wards” of Jackson Memorial Hospital. Before continuing her education under the tutelage of Dr. Mary Carnegie at Florida A&M University and between 1954 and 1955, Gibson attended Washington, D.C.’s Catholic University. In 1956, she attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she studied cancer and communicable diseases. Gibson attended the University of Miami from 1957 to 1958 and earned her B.S. degree in nursing education in 1959, after one year of study at the Teachers College at Columbia University in New York.

Gibson has worked in a variety of health organizations including the E.J. Hall Clinic in Miami, Florida; the Gallinger Memorial Hospital in Washington, D.C.; the Dade County Health Department; and the Riverside Hospital for Teenaged Drug Addicts. She also served as Nursing Supervisor and Part-time Social Worker for Mount Sinai Hospital from 1967 until 1980. In August, 1997, Gibson was appointed Miami’s interim City Commissioner. In 1984, she founded the Women’s Chamber of Commerce of Dade County.

Gibson has received many honors and awards, including a membership as Founder of the Jewish Home for the Aged, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Drum Major for Justice Award, the Jewish Home and Hospital Women’s Auxiliary Sacred Heart Award, and the Jackson Memorial Hospital Image Committee Award, among others. She is also President of the Theodore Roosevelt Gibson Memorial Fund, Inc.; a Trustee at the University of Miami; a Life Member of the NAACP; and she serves on the board for the Coconut Grove Cares Mental Health Association. She sponsored the Gibson Health Initiative, which provides testing and assistance for HIV/AIDS. In the fall of 2000, she published her autobiography, *Forbearance, Thelma Vernell Anderson Gibson, the Life of a Coconut Grove Native*. She also helped form the Theodore and Thelma School of the Performing Arts in Coconut Grove, named after herself and her late husband, the late Reverend Canon Theodore Roosevelt Gibson.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Thelma Gibson was conducted by Tracey Lewis on February 16, 2006, in Coconut Grove, Florida, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. City commissioner and nurse Thelma Gibson (1926 - 2011) worked in the city government of Miami, Florida.

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:

Gibson, Thelma Vernell, 1926-2011

Lewis, Tracey (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Gibson, Thelma Vernell, 1926-2011--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Miami (Fla.). Commission

Occupations:

City Commissioner

Nurse

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers|MedicalMakers

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 Thelma Gibson, February 16, 2006. 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 Thelma Gibson, Section
A2006_019_001_001, TRT: 0:29:11 2006/02/16

Thelma Gibson was born on December 17, 1926 in Coconut Grove, Miami, Florida to Sweetlon Albury Anderson and Thomas Anderson. Her paternal grandfather, Daniel Anderson, came to Coconut Grove in 1887 and worked for the Munroe family, including diarist Mary Barr Munroe. Upon marrying Gibson's paternal grandmother, Catherine Ratray Anderson, he purchased land in Coconut Grove. Her maternal grandparents immigrated to Florida from the Bahamas; Gibson recalls how they made fruitcakes and wine at Christmastime. Gibson's father attended St. Albans Episcopal Industrial School, and had the lightest skin in the family, often passing as white. Her mother was born in Key West, Florida, and moved to Coconut Grove, where she had fourteen children and worked as a domestic. Gibson's father had several laborer positions over his career, later working for the tag agency of Dade County, Florida and maintenance at Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami. She recalls the many fruit trees in her close knit community in Coconut Grove.

Video Oral History Interview with Thelma Gibson, Section
A2006_019_001_002, TRT: 0:30:12 2006/02/16

Thelma Gibson's parents, Sweetlon Albury Anderson and

Thomas Anderson, married around 1922 and had eleven children from 1924 to 1946. She attended Coconut Grove Training School for Colored Elementary School in Miami, Florida. Gibson recalls walking to school with her friends, belonging to Christ Episcopal Church in Miami, and attending Young People's Service League meetings of various denominations. Her family received public assistance and the support of aunts and uncles during the Great Depression. Gibson's older brother joined the U.S. Army during World War II. She graduated from George Washington Carver Senior High School in 1944, and then enrolled in the Nurse Cadet Corps in Raleigh, North Carolina. Gibson completed her operating room training at Meharry Medical College in Nashville in 1947, but was denied operating room positions due to her race. She then worked in all-black wards at Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami, and briefly at Washington, D.C.'s Gallinger Municipal Hospital from 1950 to 1951.

Video Oral History Interview with Thelma Gibson, Section
A2006_019_001_003, TRT: 0:30:32 2006/02/16

Thelma Gibson moved with her family to Richmond Heights, Florida in 1950, where she helped to raise her younger brothers and sisters and worked at Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami, Florida. She was hired at the Dade County Health Department in 1955. Gibson earned her bachelor's degree from Teachers College, Columbia University in 1961, and was finally made assistant supervisor in 1964. In 1967, she married Theodore Roosevelt Gibson, her priest at Christ Episcopal Church in Miami, and became head of the outpatient clinic at Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami Beach, Florida. After her husband's death in 1980, Gibson started the Theodore Roosevelt Gibson Memorial Fund and Gibson Charter School in his honor. She was a founder of Grovites United to Survive, which redeveloped the site of the Tiki Club as well as numerous other land parcels in Coconut Grove, Miami, Florida. Gibson served for twelve years on the Public Health Trust of Dade County and became a trustee of Florida's University of Miami in 1997.

Video Oral History Interview with Thelma Gibson, Section
A2006_019_001_004, TRT: 0:30:28 2006/02/16

Thelma Gibson recalls founding the Women's Chamber of Commerce of Miami-Dade County in 1984, and how the organization named the Thelma Gibson Award of Excellence for her. Gibson describes the founding of the Thelma Gibson Health Initiative by Merline Barton and Cherry Smart, and explains how causes and institutions, such as the Theodore R. and Thelma A. Gibson Charter School in Miami, Florida, came to bear her name. Gibson recalls receiving the ICON Award from the City of Miami, Florida upon the recommendation of Commissioner Michelle Spence-Jones. She shares her hopes for the future and reflects upon her legacy. Gibson concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.