

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Vernellia Randall

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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>	Randall, Vernellia R. (Vernellia Ruth)
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Vernellia Randall,
<b>Dates:</b>	February 26, 2008 and March 24, 2006
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2006 and 2008
<b>Physical Description:</b>	12 Betacame SP videocassettes (5:37:43).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Academic administrator and law professor Vernellia Randall (1948 - ) spoke and published widely on matters of health and race. She began her career as a nurse and nurse practitioner, and later became a professor of law at Dayton University where she also directed the Academic Excellence Program. Randall was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 26, 2008 and March 24, 2006, in Dayton, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2006_052
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Law professor Vernellia Ruth Randall was born March 6, 1948, in Gladewater, Texas to Mary Pauline Hall Randall and Ernest Randall. Both parents were associated with Jarvis Christian College. Raised by her father in difficult circumstances in Mule Shoe, Texas, Randall attended the colored school there and graduated from Carver High School in Amarillo in 1966. Receiving her A.A. degree from Amarillo College, she entered the University of Texas and earned her B.S. degree from the School of Nursing. Randall obtained her M.S. degree in nursing from the University of Washington in 1978 and in 1987 her J.D. degree from Northwestern School of Law, Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon.

Starting a career in medicine as a nurse and family nurse practitioner, Randall served as Maternal-Child Health Nurse Coordinator for the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services in Juneau, Alaska, from 1979 to 1984. She has been a professor of nursing and community health at Oregon Health Sciences University and Wright State University as well as a law professor at Northwestern School of Law, Seattle University School of Law, and the University of Dayton. She was an associate with the Portland law firm of Bullivant, Houser, Bailey, Pendergrass and Hoffman from 1987 to 1989. In 1994, Randall was hired as Associate Professor, School of Law, University of Dayton. Since that time she also has been director of the Academic Excellence Program for the University of Dayton, where she plans and implements academic support services for students and trains teaching assistants.

Highly sought after as a public speaker on matters of health and race, Randall has also published widely. She is a recipient of the Chairman's Award from the Ohio Commission on Minority Health and has been honored by a Commendation from the Ohio House of Representatives. Randall is an accomplished webmaster and has received awards for her website development. Some of her sites include: "Race, Health Care and the Law" and "Gender and the Law". Her latest book is entitled, *Dying While Black*.

The mother of two sons, Randall enjoys computers, movies, sewing and dancing.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Vernellia Randall was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 26, 2008 and March 24, 2006, in Dayton, Ohio, and was recorded on 12 Betacame SP videocassettes. Academic administrator and law professor Vernellia Randall (1948 - ) spoke and published widely on matters of health and race. She began her career as a nurse and nurse practitioner, and later became a professor of law at Dayton University where she also directed the Academic Excellence Program.

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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:

Randall, Vernellia R. (Vernellia Ruth)

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Randall, Vernellia R. (Vernellia Ruth)--Interviews

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African American women lawyers--Interviews

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African American law teachers--Interviews

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African American nurses--Interviews

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African American women political activists--Interviews

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African American women college administrators--Ohio--Dayton--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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University of Dayton

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## Occupations:

Law Professor

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers

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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 Vernellia Randall, February 26, 2008 and March 24, 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 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).

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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 Vernellia Randall, Section A2006\_052\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:37  
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Vernellia Randall was born on March 6, 1948, in Gladewater, Texas, to Mary Hall Randall and Ernest Randall. Her maternal great-grandfather, James McGill, was black and Native American. He owned a large amount of land in White Oak, Texas, where he established his family far from the white community. He divided his land among his thirteen children, including Randall's grandmother. Randall's grandparents, Maude McGill Hall and Jesse Hall, were farmers in White Oak. Although trained as a licensed practical nurse, her grandmother spent her life as a farmer's wife. Randall's mother was born in 1921, and attended Jarvis Christian College, where she studied sociology and met and later married her father. While living in Hawkins, Texas, she suffered a miscarriage when the black doctor would not drive his new car into the dusty black community. Randall was deeply impacted when her mother died of cancer when she was seven years old, and recalls her mother's protectiveness of her children and her lessons about honesty.

African American women lawyers--Interviews.

African American law teachers--Interviews.

African American nurses--Interviews.

African American women political activists--Interviews.

African American women college administrators--Ohio--Dayton--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Vernellia Randall, Section A2006\_052\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:46  
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Vernellia Randall's father, Ernest Randall, was born in 1916 in East Texas. Her great-grandparents, Manlis Randles and Narcissa Dean Randles, were born in 1845 and 1854, respectively, and were slaves in Mississippi before migrating to Texas. Her grandfather, Tom Randall, who changed the spelling of the family surname, owned land in East Texas by the age of thirty. Influenced by black women who spread the word about education to the black churches of his time, he sold his land and relocated his family to Hawkins, Texas, where they were educated at Jarvis Christian College. After struggling through school, Randall's father worked in the steel mills and as a cab driver before becoming a teacher in the 1960s. After Randall's mother's death when she was seven years old, her father moved his three children from Pennsylvania back to Texas, where they attended school in Hawkins, Munday, Beaumont and Muleshoe. Randall recalls her father's personality, and travelling in caravans across a segregated Texas.

Video Oral History Interview with Vernellia Randall, Section A2006\_052\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:51  
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Vernellia Randall's father, Ernest Randall, was hired in 1960 as a teacher at the all-black, two-room Muleshoe Colored School, where Randall continued

elementary school. Randall recalls the segregated school system, where she was accused of cheating when she attained the highest score on an exam. She also reflects upon what was lost when the schools were integrated. Randall's family shared the teacher's house with the school's principal, Christine Perkin Rogers. After her father's affair with Rogers, both lost their jobs. Her father left to teach at a Native American reservation in New Mexico, and Randall and her siblings were left in the care of Rogers and her husband in Amarillo, Texas. Rogers established illicit businesses, like a hotel for men and a bar that served alcohol illegally, and forced Randall and her siblings to work at them. She recalls the African American community in Amarillo, and how black leaders and the police failed to intervene in her foster mother's abuse of her and her siblings.

Video Oral History Interview with Vernellia Randall, Section A2006\_052\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:14  
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Vernellia Randall and her siblings grew up in Amarillo, Texas under the care of their father's girlfriend, Christine Perkin Rogers, who physically and emotionally abused them. Her father became aware of the abuse but did nothing to address it. While Randall coped by immersing herself in her schoolwork, her brother, James Randall, resorted to alcoholism. A quiet and studious teenager, Randall attended Amarillo's Carver High School, where she deliberately kept a low profile to avoid public confrontation with her foster mother. Although she had passed scholarship examinations to attend Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1966, she enrolled at Amarillo Junior College at her foster mother's insistence, and continued to work at the hotel. In 1968, Randall transferred to the University of Texas at Austin. Randall reflects upon Rogers' manipulation of her, and the failure of the black leaders in school, the church and the community to intervene on behalf of her and her siblings.

Video Oral History Interview with Vernellia Randall, Section A2006\_052\_001\_005, TRT: 0:30:17  
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Vernellia Randall enrolled in the nursing program at the University of Texas in Austin in 1968. Deeply affected by her foster mother's abuse, Randall rebelled in college, and experimented with sex, drugs and activism, allowing her grades to suffer. When she became pregnant in her junior year, she resolved to stay in school and improved her grades. She was supported by Almetris Duran, her dormitory's house mother. Randall worked at a boarding house to support herself financially during this time. After the birth of her son, Tshaka Randall, in 1971, she applied to the U.S. Welfare System, which she found to be convoluted, with many rules and restrictions. Randall graduated in 1972, and moved to Portland, Oregon, where she lived with her father for a year. Randall worked as an emergency room nurse at Bess Kaiser Hospital, and faced discrimination in her pursuit of a supervisory role. She also talks about her siblings' lives as adults and visiting her foster mother before leaving Texas.

Video Oral History Interview with Vernellia Randall, Section A2006\_052\_001\_006, TRT: 0:30:26  
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Vernellia Randall was denied acceptance to the master's program in nursing at the University of Washington in 1973, due to her poor scores. After she personally visited the dean to request admission, Randall was accepted into the program. As a single mother with financial hardships, Randall became clinically depressed. With support from a faculty member, she was able to stabilize her condition and decided to leave school to work as a family nurse practitioner. At a new community health center, she served as the primary healthcare provider for underserved populations of color. She created a school physical program and held health fairs. Randall married Vivian Charles Phillips shortly before the birth

of her second son, Issa Randall, in 1977. She followed her husband to Alaska, where she worked as a public health nurse in Fairbanks and as a maternal child nurse coordinator at the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services in Juneau. She talks about her experiences of racial discrimination in Alaska.

Video Oral History Interview with Vernellia Randall, Section A2006\_052\_002\_007, TRT: 0:29:40  
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Vernellia Randall worked as a maternal child nurse coordinator for the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services from 1979 to 1984, and her sister, Brenda Randall, followed her there. In Alaska, Randall noticed racial discrimination primarily against Native Americans. Randall was criticized for her writing disability, and experienced further discrimination when her white, male trainees were repeatedly promoted above her. After a terrifying plane ride through a storm while flying on official business, Randall decided to leave her position in Juneau. In 1984, she moved her sons to Portland, Oregon, where she attended Northwestern School of Law at Lewis and Clark College. Randall recalls her sons' challenges growing up in a predominantly white environment, where they saw few black professionals. Her older son, Tshaka Randall, had difficulty adjusting to his private school in Portland, where neither his black nor his white peers accepted him. She also recalls her foster mother's refusal to meet her sons.

Video Oral History Interview with Vernellia Randall, Section A2006\_052\_002\_008, TRT: 0:29:30  
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Vernellia Randall moved to Portland, Oregon in 1984 to attend Northwestern School of Law at Lewis and Clark College. Prior to her enrollment, she read extensively on the requisites for success as a law student. Although she faced isolation as the only black student in her class, Randall learned to effectively navigate law school, and manage her personal life as a single mother. She received guidance and mentorship from her criminal law professor, Susan Mandiberg, and the dean of the school. In 1987, Randall graduated eleventh in her class, but found it difficult to obtain a job at a law firm. With a reference from her law school dean, Randall became the first African American hired by the firm of Bullivant, Wright, Leedy, Johnson, Pendergrass and Hoffman in Portland. While working as an associate, she was diagnosed with a writing disability. When Randall became active in organizations for black and women lawyers in her personal time, she faced reprisals from her firm.

Video Oral History Interview with Vernellia Randall, Section A2006\_052\_002\_009, TRT: 0:30:02  
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Vernellia Randall faced discrimination as an associate lawyer at Bullivant, Wright, Leedy, Johnson, Pendergrass and Hoffman in Portland, Oregon when she refused to disengage from women's rights and racial activism. She negotiated with the firm, and received six months of paid time to find another job, in return for withholding her racial discrimination suit. In 1990, Randall accepted an offer from the University of Dayton School of Law, where she and law professor William L. Stallworth integrated the faculty. When her family moved into the white neighborhood of Oakwood, her sons were racially profiled by the police. Randall also recalls black men being racially profiled on campus at the University of Dayton. A faculty member for eighteen years at the time of the interview, Randall faced discrimination in tenure review. The school also disregarded accolades she received for her healthcare law research, which the dean called valueless. She recalls a particularly threatening confrontation with the associate dean.

Video Oral History Interview with Vernellia Randall, Section A2006\_052\_002\_010, TRT: 0:28:40

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Vernellia Randall taught a range of perspective courses at the University of Dayton School of Law, including on race and racism in American law; and gender and law. At the risk of unfavorable reviews, Randall's pedagogy required first-year students to examine the law's biases regarding race, gender and sexual orientation. She founded and directed an academic support program to help first-year law students, particularly African Americans, navigate the rigors of law school with greater ease. At the time of the interview, Randall served on the law faculty for eighteen years. She also contributed to and managed several websites with content ranging from race and racism in the law; gender and law; the 2008 presidential elections; and the disproportionately small number of blacks in law school and law practice. While critical of the lack of diversity at the University of Dayton's law school, Randall also critiques the sexism and extreme conservatism of law departments at historically black colleges.

Video Oral History Interview with Vernellia Randall, Section A2006\_052\_002\_011, TRT: 0:28:20  
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Vernellia Randall published her book, 'Dying While Black,' in 2006; it compiles thirty years of her scholarship in health and law. In the book, she examines disparities in the health status of African Americans. Randall details the underlying issues of discrimination, particularly through government policies and manipulative marketing strategies, that negatively impact African Americans' life expectancy. With the book already well received by audiences at the time of the interview, she hoped to bring greater publicity to the issues of black health through interviews on the radio and television circuit. Randall's work was recognized internationally, and she traveled frequently as an invited speaker. She reflects upon the continuing issue of race relations and discrimination in America, and the importance of acknowledging this issue in order to address it. She describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community, and reflects upon her life.

Video Oral History Interview with Vernellia Randall, Section A2006\_052\_002\_012, TRT: 0:13:20  
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Vernellia Randall reflects upon her legacy and how she would like to be remembered. She talks about her two sons, Tshaka Randall, a law professor, and Issa Randall, a fine arts photographer. Randall concludes her interview by narrating her photographs.