

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Juanita Baranco

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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>	Baranco, Juanita, 1949-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Juanita Baranco,
<b>Dates:</b>	April 11, 2006
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2006
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:20:02).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Lawyer and entrepreneur Juanita Baranco (1949 - ) was COO of Baranco Automotive Group, one of the first African American owned car dealerships in the Atlanta area. A former assistant attorney general for the state of Georgia, she was the first African American woman to chair the Georgia Board of Regents, and sat on the board of trustees for Clark Atlanta University. Baranco was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 11, 2006, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2006_072
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Lawyer and entrepreneur Juanita Powell Baranco was born in Washington, D.C., on March 19, 1949. Raised in Shreveport, Louisiana, Baranco earned her high school diploma and continued her studies earning her B.S. degree and her J.D. degree from Louisiana State University. Before turning to business, Baranco had a successful law career, serving as assistant attorney general for the state of Georgia. She is the executive vice president and chief operating officer of Baranco Automotive Group, which she co-founded with her husband, Gregory Baranco, in 1978. It was one of the first African American owned car dealerships in the metropolitan Atlanta area. That effort led the Barancos to also owning several other car dealerships including Mercedes-Benz and Acura dealerships with annual sales reaching \$100 million dollars.

Baranco's extensive involvement in education has led her to serve as the chairman of the DeKalb County Education Task Force and as a member of the Georgia State Board of Education from 1985 to 1991. She was appointed by Governor Zell Miller to the Board of Regents and in 1995 became the first African American woman to chair the board. She sits on the Board of Trustees of Clark Atlanta University and also serves on the Board of Directors of Georgia Power Company.

Her business and community activities have won her numerous awards, among which are recognition by the Dow Jones Company for entrepreneurial excellence; the first Trumpet Award from Turner Broadcasting System for entrepreneurial excellence; Entrepreneur of the Year by the Atlanta Business League; the DECCA Award from the *Atlantic Business Chronicle*, the YWCA's Women of Achievement Award; and the Atlanta History Center's Defining Women in Atlanta Award. Baranco has been featured in *Essence* magazine as one of best businesswomen in Atlanta and was also a finalist for the 2003 *Time* magazine Quality Dealer Award. She is a member of the American Bar Association and the State Bar Associations of Georgia and Louisiana.

Baranco lives in Atlanta with her husband and children.

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# Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Juanita Baranco was conducted by Shawn Wilson on April 11, 2006, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Lawyer and entrepreneur Juanita Baranco (1949 - ) was COO of Baranco Automotive Group, one of the first African American owned car dealerships in the Atlanta area. A former assistant attorney general for the state of Georgia, she was the first African American woman to chair the Georgia Board of Regents, and sat on the board of trustees for Clark Atlanta University.

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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:

Baranco, Juanita, 1949-

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Baranco, Juanita, 1949- --Interviews

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African American businesspeople--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews

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African American women lawyers--Georgia--Interviews

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College trustees--Georgia--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:

Entrepreneur

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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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 Juanita Baranco, April 11, 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 Juanita Baranco, Section A2006\_072\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

Juanita Baranco was born on March 19, 1949 in Washington, D.C. to Evelyn Evans Powell and Jerome Powell. Baranco's maternal great grandparents were born into slavery in Mississippi. Her maternal grandfather, Albert Evans, owned five hundred acres of land, and armed himself to defend his property against whites who sought to steal it. Her paternal grandfather, Solomon E. Powell, Sr., graduated from Meharry Medical College and was the first African American physician in Shreveport, Louisiana. Baranco's mother was born in Grenada, Mississippi, and she continued her schooling against her father's wishes, graduating high school and then from Atlanta's Clark College. She then worked as a secretary for Mary McLeod Bethune. Baranco's father attended Howard University and studied law at Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in Baton Rouge. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II before going into practice. Her parents met in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and married after the war.

African American businesspeople--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews.

African American women lawyers--Georgia--Interviews.

College trustees--Georgia--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Juanita Baranco, Section A2006\_072\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Juanita Baranco's paternal uncle, Solomon Powell, Jr., denied his lover, Ingrid Bergman's request that he accompany her to Hollywood. After Baranco's father returned from World War II, where he saw the aftermath of Mussolini's execution, her parents married. They had three children, including Jerome Powell, II, who nearly died in childhood from Down syndrome, but recovered while staying with Baranco's maternal grandparents. Baranco was born in Washington, D.C., but her family moved to Shreveport, Louisiana. Baranco recalls watching westerns on television, and describes staying out past midnight in the summer. She lived with her great grandmother, who once saw President Abraham Lincoln. She befriended her neighbor, Mrs. Gill. Her family belonged to Williams Memorial C.M.E. Temple Church, where her paternal grandfather was a founding member. She attended Central Free Methodist Christian Day School, where she excelled at reading, and then Notre Dame High School, where her band director was Isaac Ben Greggs.

Video Oral History Interview with Juanita Baranco, Section A2006\_072\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Juanita Baranco's father, Jerome Powell, was a practicing lawyer and real estate manager in Shreveport, Louisiana. Baranco attended Central Free Methodist Christian Day School, and then Notre Dame High School, where her teachers were predominantly white nuns. She also played in the band under director Isaac Ben Greggs. She took honors classes and nearly qualified to be one of the first students to integrate Shreveport's previously all-white Catholic girls' school. Baranco picketed Stan's Record Shop for their refusal to hire African Americans and participated in sit-ins at F.W. Woolworth Company. She attended Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, where she heard David Duke's racist speeches, and protested to lower the flag to half-mast after Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination. Baranco met her husband, Gregory Baranco, in 1967, and they married in 1969. After graduation, Baranco moved with her husband to Detroit, Michigan for his job with Ford Motor Company.

Video Oral History Interview with Juanita Baranco, Section A2006\_072\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:02 ?

Juanita Baranco's mother, Evelyn Evans Powell, founded the Caddo Bossier

Association for Mentally Retarded Children. Baranco married Gregory Baranco in 1969. She and her husband moved to Baton Rouge, where both completed graduate school; she attended Louisiana State University Law School, graduating in 1973. After Baranco raised twenty-five thousand dollars through bank loans, she and her husband bought the Smith-Johnson Pontiac dealership in East Point, Georgia in 1978. In order to earn money during an economic recession, she worked as assistant attorney general for the State of Georgia, but left in 1983 to focus on the business. The Baranco Automotive Group eventually expanded to several locations, including Tallahassee, Florida and Atlanta, Georgia. Baranco and her husband founded First Southern Bank with the goal of providing loans to entrepreneurs. She served on the Georgia Board of Education from 1985 to 1991 and then the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, where she became chair.

Video Oral History Interview with Juanita Baranco, Section A2006\_072\_001\_005, TRT: 0:23:10 ?

Juanita Baranco and her husband, Gregory Baranco, agreed to merge their business, First Southern Bank, with Citizens Trust Bank of Atlanta, Georgia, which was owned by Herman Russell. The Barancos led the development of Sandstone Shores, a multi-phase single-family residential subdivision in DeKalb County, Georgia. In recent years, they decided to close Baranco Pontiac, Inc., their original dealership located in Decatur, Georgia, to focus on their other numerous locations in the Southeast. Baranco was a finalist for the prestigious Time Magazine Quality Dealer Award in 2003, and also received the first annual Trumpet Award. She recalls the challenges she faced as a female business executive, and how she overcame them to achieve success in the automotive industry. Baranco reflects upon the importance of knowing one's history, and talks about The HistoryMakers project. She describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community and how she would like to be remembered.