



Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Rachel Noel

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Rachel Noel
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Rachel Noel,
Dates:	April 22, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	4 Betacam SP videocassettes (1:52:00).
Abstract:	Education chief executive, education chief executive, and african american studies professor Rachel Noel (1918 - 2008) was the first African American woman elected public official in the State of Colorado, and the first African American to serve on the University of Colorado Board of Regents. As a member of the Denver Board of Education, she presented the “Noel Resolution,” which required that the school district provide equal education opportunities for every child in Denver. Noel was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 22, 2006, in Denver, Colorado. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_083
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Educator Rachel Louise Bassette Noel was born on January 15, 1918, in Hampton, Virginia. Both of her parents were college graduates and her father, Andrew William Ernest Bassette, Jr., was a lawyer. They believed in the importance of a higher education and stressed to her the significance of going to college. Noel earned her B.A. degree from Hampton Institute, later named Hampton University, and she received her M.A. degree in sociology from Fisk University.

Noel married Edmond F. Noel, a physician, in 1942 and the couple moved to Denver, Colorado. In 1965, she became the first African American to be elected to the Denver Board of Education. Having won this seat made her the first African American woman to hold public office in the State of Colorado. In 1968, Noel presented the Board of Education with the “Noel Resolution,” which required that the school district provide equal educational opportunities for every child in Denver. It also called for the superintendent to devise a plan that integrated the school system. After the resolution’s proposal was presented, she received numerous life-threatening phone calls; however, the resolution passed in February, 1970.

Appointed by former Governor Richard Lamm in 1976, Noel became the first African American to serve on the University of Colorado Board of Regents. In 1978, she won statewide election to a six-year term on the board and served a one-year term as chairperson of the board. She has been a professor at Metropolitan State College, as well as chairperson of the school’s African American Studies Department. She also served as a member of the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee for the Health Sciences at the University of Colorado, Boulder and Denver

campuses and the Commissioner for the Denver Housing Authority.

Noel received numerous honors and awards including an Honorary Doctor of Public Service degree from the University of Denver; named one of Colorado's Top 100 Citizens of the Century; the Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award; and the naming in her honor of a public middle school in Denver, Rachel B. Noel Middle School. In 1981, the Rachel B. Noel Distinguished Professorship was created in her honor at Metropolitan State College. In 2004, the University of Colorado awarded her an Honorary Degree in Humane Letters. Noel passed away on February 4, 2008 at the age of ninety.

Rachel Noel was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on April 22, 2006.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Rachel Noel was conducted by Shawn Wilson on April 22, 2006, in Denver, Colorado, and was recorded on 4 Betacam SP videocassettes. Education chief executive, education chief executive, and african american studies professor Rachel Noel (1918 - 2008) was the first African American woman elected public official in the State of Colorado, and the first African American to serve on the University of Colorado Board of Regents. As a member of the Denver Board of Education, she presented the "Noel Resolution," which required that the school district provide equal education opportunities for every child in Denver.

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:

Noel, Rachel

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Rachel Noel--Interviews

African American women college teachers--Colorado--Denver--Interviews

College trustees--Colorado--Interviews

School board members--Colorado--Denver--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Denver Public Schools

University of Colorado

HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

EducationMakers

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 Rachel Noel, April 22, 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 8/24/2011 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, April 22, 2006

Video Oral History Interview with Rachel Noel, Section A2006_083_001_001, TRT: 0:29:25
2006/04/22

Rachel Noel discusses her family history. Her mother, Phoebe Perry, was born in Wytheville, Virginia and graduated from Howard University as a teacher. Her father, Andrew William Ernest Bassette, Jr., earned his law degree and went to take Virginia bar exam in Wytheville where he met Phoebe. They married and lived in Hampton, Virginia. Noel also talks about her oldest sister, Elaine, who was accidentally killed when she ran behind the car as their father was backing out of the driveway. She describes Wytheville, Virginia as a small town in the mountains and explains that the blacks worked for whites. Noel discusses her earliest memories of growing up in Hampton as being filled with happy days and a close family. Noel discusses her school experiences in Hampton, Virginia where she started at the highest level in school and has never been satisfied with just getting by.

African American families--Virginia--Wytheville

African American families--Virginia--Hampton

African Americans children--Virginia--Wytheville

Howard University

African American education--Virginia--Hampton

African American teachers--Virginia

African American lawyers--Virginia

Video Oral History Interview with Rachel Noel, Section A2006_083_001_002, TRT: 0:28:22
2006/04/22

Rachel Noel says that she did not notice a difference in treatment African American received due to skin tone. She recalls that the emphasis at the Elementary school she attended was placed on doing your best to make good grades and talks about the role of religion in her life growing up. Hampton Institute had a great reputation for producing the best teachers and Noel felt that was the only career option for her and discusses the influence that Dr. Charles Johnson had on her decision to attend Fisk University. Noel talks about her husband, Edmond F. Noel, a physician and a graduate of Meharry Medical College. They married in 1942 and settled in Denver, Colorado. Noel discusses life after graduating from Fisk University in 1940 when she traveled to

Washington, D.C. to work at the Southeast House, a settlement house, where she worked as a social worker. Noel shares her experiences at Fisk University.

African Americans--Race identity--Virginia

African American education--Virginia--Hampton

African American children--Virginia--Hampton

Hampton Institute

Meharry Medical College

African American physicians--Colorado--Denver

Fisk University

African American teachers--Washington (D.C.)

School boards--African American membership--Colorado--Denver

Video Oral History Interview with Rachel Noel, Section A2006_083_001_003, TRT: 0:29:56
2006/04/22

Rachel Noel discusses her work with the Girl Scouts in Denver, Colorado as well as her children, Buddy and Angela Noel, whom are college graduates. Noel discusses becoming involved in the school board of the Denver Public School System. She campaigned at churches where she explained the need for the black voice in the school system. At the time, the schools in Denver, Colorado were segregated, despite the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka court decision. The segregation was unofficial and unspoken, and she helped to integrate the schools. Noel talks about being appointed by former Governor Richard Lamm to become the first African American to serve on the University of Colorado Board of Regents. When discussing the Black Power movement, Noel explains that she believes in both sides of the program and you have to do what is necessary to help people.

Denver (Colo.)

Girl Scouts of the United States of America

School integration--Colorado--Denver

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka

Lamm, Richard D.

University of Colorado. Board of Regents

Black power--United States

Video Oral History Interview with Rachel Noel, Section A2006_083_001_004, TRT: 0:24:17
2006/04/22

Rachel Noel describes herself as a person that did what anyone should do. During the integration process, she emphasized giving black students the same opportunities as white students. Noel feels that her contribution to Denver's African American community is simply being a voice and that she has been fortunate that it made a difference. She hopes for the black community will not lose sight of what has been accomplished and desires her legacy to be the changes she made in the Denver community. In her honor, a school was named after her called Rachel B. Noel Middle School in Denver, Colorado. Noel sends a message to current and future generations that each person is given opportunities to do well and to use them. Noel shares and narrates personal photographs.

African American students--Colorado--Denver

African American education--Colorado--Denver

School integration--Colorado--Denver

Education (Primary)--Colorado--Denver

Public schools--Colorado--Denver

Denver (Colo.)