

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Dr. Rose Niles McCrary

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## Overview of the Collection

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| <b>Repository:</b>           | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com  |
| <b>Creator:</b>              | McCrary, Rose Niles, 1961-  |
| <b>Title:</b>                | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Rose Niles McCrary,   |
| <b>Dates:</b>                | January 26, 2007  |
| <b>Bulk Dates:</b>           | 2007  |
| <b>Physical Description:</b> | 5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:27:54).   |
| <b>Abstract:</b>             | Pastor and theologian Reverend Dr. Rose Niles McCrary (1961 - ) served as the Minister of the First Presbyterian Church in Mount Vernon, New York. In addition to her work as a minister, McCrary served as a trustee, and later, president, of the Mount Vernon School District School Board; an advocate for the underprivileged of Mount Vernon; and a volunteer teacher of religious studies at Sing Sing Correctional Facility. McCrary was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 26, 2007, in Mt. Vernon, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| <b>Identification:</b>       | A2007_031   |
| <b>Language:</b>             | The interview and records are in English.   |

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Theologian Rose Eileen Niles McCrary was born on October 26, 1961, in New York City, the daughter of Jean Niles of Brisbane, Australia, and David Niles of St. Vincent, British West Indies. As a child, McCrary grew up in the University Heights Presbyterian Church in the Bronx where she served as a member of Youth Connection. McCrary received her diploma in 1979 from the Bronx High School

of Science, and that same year enrolled in Harvard Radcliffe University where she received her B.A. degree in comparative world religion in 1983. In 1990, in addition to receiving her Masters of Divinity degree from Harvard Divinity School, McCrary also received training in family and group process at Kantor Family Institute and the Family Center, Incorporated in Somerville, Massachusetts.

McCrary was ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament in 1991, by the Presbytery of New York City, and served as Pastor of the Emmanuel Presbyterian Church in the Lower Eastside of Manhattan until 1996. McCrary also served as a moderator of the Synod of the Northeast Presbyterian Church. Moving to Mount Vernon, New York, in 1996, McCrary became the Minister of the First Presbyterian Church; included in her ministry are a women's homeless shelter, a music academy, and an immigration justice ministry. Returning to her studies, McCrary received her doctorate of ministry degree in 1998 from the New York Theological Seminary where she also became a member of the faculty. As a volunteer, McCrary served as a religion professor at Sing Sing Correctional Facility in Ossining, New York.

In 2003, McCrary was elected a trustee to the Mount Vernon School District School Board and in 2004 served as the President of the Board. McCrary served for over twelve years as the pastor of the First Presbyterian Church. McCrary continued to work with the community and speak out on behalf of the underprivileged in Mount Vernon, New York, where she resided with her daughter, Eupha Jeanne.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reverend Dr. Rose Niles McCrary was conducted by Shawn Wilson on January 26, 2007, in Mt. Vernon, New York, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Pastor and theologian Reverend Dr. Rose Niles McCrary (1961 - ) served as the Minister of the First Presbyterian Church in Mount Vernon, New York. In addition to her work as a minister, McCrary served as a trustee, and later, president, of the Mount Vernon School District School Board; an advocate for the underprivileged of Mount Vernon; and a volunteer teacher of religious studies at Sing Sing Correctional Facility.

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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:

McCrary, Rose Niles, 1961-

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer)

Burghilea, Neculai (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

McCrary, Rose Niles, 1961---Interviews

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African American clergy--Interviews

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African American civic leaders--Interviews

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African American educators--Interviews

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African American school administrators--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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New York Theological Seminary

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## **Occupations:**

Pastor

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Theologian

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

ReligionMakers

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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 Reverend Dr. Rose Niles McCrary, January 26, 2007. 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).

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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 Reverend Dr. Rose Niles McCrary, Section A2007\_031\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:26 2007/01/26

Reverend Dr. Rose Niles McCrary was born on October 26, 1961 in New York City to Jean Davis Niles and David Niles, Sr. McCrary's maternal grandfather, Harold Davis, was a British Protestant who immigrated to Australia, where he married McCrary's Irish Catholic grandmother, Eileen Kenneally Davis, and had six children. McCrary's paternal grandfather, James Niles, was born in Barbados, and was a member of the Plymouth Brethren faith. A craftsman and preacher, he married McCrary's Scottish paternal grandmother, Rose Medford Niles, in on the island of St. Vincent, where they raised their fourteen children. McCrary's father was a shoemaker in St. Vincent, but worked as a carpenter, porter and elevator

operator after settling in New York City's Harlem neighborhood. Wanting to travel, he joined the U.S. Merchant Marines, and met and married McCrary's mother in Australia. They purchased a home in the Bronx, New York. As a child, McCrary attended University Heights Presbyterian Church, where she sang in the choir.

African American clergy--Interviews.

African American civic leaders--Interviews.

African American educators--Interviews.

African American school administrators--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Rose Niles McCrary,  
Section A2007\_031\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:26 2007/01/26

Reverend Dr. Rose Niles McCrary grew up in a mixed race family in the 1960s. Her mother perceived her children as white with an olive complexion, and had difficulty coping with their racial identity crises, while her father struggled with racial discrimination, and encouraged McCrary to pass for white. However, after retirement, McCrary's father taught McCrary about her African heritage through West Indian stories and cuisine. As a child, McCrary and her siblings were influenced by successful African American role models like their neighbors, the Thompsons, and their elementary school principal at P.S. 26 in the Bronx, New York. McCrary enjoyed reading, and wanted to be an astronaut after the moon landing in 1969. During a conversation with her Sunday school teacher at University Heights Presbyterian Church, she developed ideas about God and religion that stayed with her into adulthood, and influenced her pedagogy at New York Theological Seminary.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Rose Niles McCrary,  
Section A2007\_031\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:08 2007/01/26

Reverend Dr. Rose Niles McCrary describes racial discrimination in the United States and Australia. As a child, her first experiences of racial discrimination occurred on a family trip to Baltimore, Maryland, and at her church, where a fellow congregant told her she could never marry someone white, because their children might look black. From 1975, McCrary attended The Bronx High School of Science, where she was encouraged to

apply to Harvard University. She enrolled there in 1979, and was influenced by Professor Diana L. Eck to major in comparative world religions. During her first year of college, McCrary served as vice moderator of the Presbyterian regional synod on behalf of University Heights Presbyterian Church. McCrary was also involved in the Phillips Brooks House Association, which sent tutors to housing projects. As a college student, McCrary was inspired to explore her racial identity through poetry by Maya Angelou, Nikki Giovanni and Ntozake Shange. She recites her poem, 'Diaspora Dreaming.'

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Rose Niles McCrary, Section A2007\_031\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:21 2007/01/26

Reverend Dr. Rose Niles McCrary was first called to the ministry as an undergraduate during a trip to Kenya with her church, but her pastor discouraged her from pursuing her calling. Deterred, she graduated from Harvard University in 1983, and joined The Kantor Institute, where she served as a social worker in the housing projects of Cambridge. She was later promoted to administrator of the institute's Family Union Network program. Her experience at The Kantor Institute only encouraged McCrary to join the ministry, and she obtained her master's degree in divinity from Harvard Divinity School in 1990, the year her daughter was born. She was ordained in 1991, and became the pastor of the Emmanuel Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, New York. McCrary describes the role of African American churches in the social justice movement, and her association with the United Black Clergy of Westchester and its leader, Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson. McCrary also talks about theology and various conceptions of God.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Rose Niles McCrary, Section A2007\_031\_001\_005, TRT: 0:28:33 2007/01/26

Reverend Dr. Rose Niles McCrary served as pastor of New York City's Emmanuel Presbyterian Church from 1991, and as the moderator of the regional synod. In 1996, McCrary accepted a position at First Presbyterian Church in Mount Vernon, New York, and became the only African American minister in the Hudson River Presbytery network. From 1998 to 2001, McCrary completed her

doctoral degree in ministry at the New York Theological Seminary, through which, in 2003, she taught the master of professional studies program at Sing Sing Correctional Facility, where inmates earned advanced theological degrees. Eventually, her commitment to social justice and her connection to Reverend Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson led to McCrary's election to the school board of Mount Vernon, New York. McCrary reflects upon her concerns for the African American community, and how she would like to be remembered. She concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.