

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Aileen Clarke Hernandez

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Hernandez, Aileen C.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Aileen Clarke Hernandez,
Dates:	April 12, 2007 and November 8, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2007 and 2013
Physical Description:	11 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (4:48:35).
Abstract:	Labor activist and foundation executive Aileen Clarke Hernandez (1926 - 2017) was the co-founder of the National Organization for Women; the National Women's Political Caucus; the Sapphire Publishing Company; and Hernandez and Associates. Hernandez was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 12, 2007 and November 8, 2013, in San Francisco, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_134
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civil rights, union and women's rights activist Aileen Clarke Hernandez was born Aileen Clarke on May 23, 1926, in Brooklyn, New York. Her Jamaican-born parents, theatrical seamstress Ethel Louise Hall Clarke and Garveyite brushmaker Charles Henry Clarke, named their daughter for Aileen Pringle, a film actress. Hernandez, who grew up in the ethnically-mixed Bay Ridge neighborhood of New York City, attended elementary school at P.S. 176 and graduated in 1943 as school newspaper editor, vice president, and salutatorian of Bay Ridge High School. At

Howard University, she was taught by E. Franklin Frazier, Ralph Bunche, Sterling Brown, Alain Locke, Howard Thurman, Emmit Dorsey, Charles Hamilton Houston, James Nabrit, and Thurgood Marshall. Hernandez was a member of the Howard Players, edited *The Hilltop*, and was active in the NAACP with her friend Pauli Murray. Hernandez graduated magna cum laude from Howard University with her B.A. degree in political science in 1947.

Returning briefly for graduate studies at New York University, Hernandez moved to Los Angeles to take an internship with the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and later went on to earn her M.S. degree in government from California State University at Los Angeles in 1961.

Hernandez worked for the IGLWU from 1951 to 1960; eventually she backed the efforts of the Federation of Union Representatives to obtain benefits from the IGLWU. In 1960, Hernandez resigned from the IGLWU to join the successful re-election campaign of California State Comptroller and future United States Senator Allan Cranston. In 1962, Hernandez was appointed by California Governor Pat Brown to be assistant chief of the California Division of Fair Employment Practices and began enforcing the state's 1959 anti-discrimination law. In 1965, Hernandez was appointed a commissioner of the newly-formed United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) by President Lyndon B. Johnson. As the first female and second minority appointed to the EEOC Commission, Hernandez paid particular attention to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In 1966, Hernandez co-founded the activist group, National Organization for Women (NOW), with her friend and Episcopal priest, Pauli Murray, author Betty Friedan, and others. From 1970 to 1971, Hernandez served as the second national president of NOW, following Friedan. In 1971, Hernandez helped found the National Women's Political Caucus, and in 1972 helped create NOW's Minority Women's Task Force. That same year, Hernandez formed Sapphire Publishing Company with nine other black women. Leaving NOW in 1979, Hernandez served on the board of the *Ms.* Foundation from 1976 to 1985. Hernandez toured China in 1978, and after touring South Africa in 1981, released the book, *South Africa: Time Running Out*.

Hernandez served as the president of Hernandez and Associates, which she founded in 1967; she has taught at San Francisco State University and the University of California at Berkeley. Hernandez was a Regents Scholar in Residence at the University of California at Santa Barbara in 1996. Hernandez has been honored by the National Urban Coalition, the Northern California American Civil Liberties Foundation, Howard University and many other organizations. In 2005, Hernandez was one of 1,000 women from 150 nations who were collectively nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for their work in social justice and

civil rights.

Hernandez passed away on February 13, 2017.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Aileen Clarke Hernandez was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 12, 2007 and November 8, 2013, in San Francisco, California, and was recorded on 11 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. Labor activist and foundation executive Aileen Clarke Hernandez (1926 - 2017) was the co-founder of the National Organization for Women; the National Women's Political Caucus; the Sapphire Publishing Company; and Hernandez and Associates.

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:

Hernandez, Aileen C.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Hernandez, Aileen C.--Interviews

African American businesspeople--Interviews

African American civic leaders--Interviews

African American civil rights workers--Interviews

African American women executives--Interviews

Publishers and publishing--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

National Organization for Women

Occupations:

Labor Activist

Foundation Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Aileen Clarke Hernandez, April 12, 2007 and November 8, 2013. 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 Aileen Clarke Hernandez, Section A2007_134_001_008, TRT: 8:31:10 2013/11/08

Aileen Clarke Hernandez was born on May 23, 1926 in New York City to Ethel Hall Clarke and Charles Clarke, Sr. Her paternal grandfather was a minister, and raised seven children with her paternal grandmother in Kingston, Jamaica. Her maternal grandfather, Ernest Hall, was a merchant, and owned a lucrative tavern in Jamaica. After her maternal grandmother died, he remarried a young seamstress, who went on to tour the United States with Jamaican actress Aileen Pringle. Eventually, Clarke Hernandez's mother joined her stepmother in the United States; and, at a dance, met Clarke Hernandez's father, who had also emigrated from Jamaica. Her father was a paintbrush craftsman for the M. Grumbacher Company, and a follower of Marcus Garvey. Clarke Hernandez grew up during the Great Depression in the rural Bay Ridge neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, where her family was the only black household. Clarke Hernandez had two siblings, Norris Clarke and Charles Clarke, Jr.

Video Oral History Interview with Aileen Clarke Hernandez, Section A2007_134_001_009, TRT: 9:29:27 2013/11/08

Aileen Clarke Hernandez was young when her family purchased a home in the all-white Bay Ridge community of Brooklyn, New York. There, they faced discrimination from a neighbor, who petitioned for their removal from the community; but were defended by Clarke Hernandez's school principal. Clarke Hernandez excelled as a student at P.S. 176, and went on to attend Bay Ridge High School, where she was placed in the advanced Turner School program. She was also active in theater, editor of the school newspaper and vice president of her class. In 1943, she graduated as salutatorian; and, with her school counsellor's help, received a scholarship to Howard University in Washington, D.C. There, Clarke

Hernandez's experiences of segregation influenced her to switch her major from education to political science. She was taught by political scientist Ralph Bunche and sociologist E. Franklin Frazier, and met attorney Charles Hamilton Houston through the school's NAACP chapter, where she was an active member.

Video Oral History Interview with Aileen Clarke Hernandez, Section A2007_134_001_010, TRT: 10:33:13 2013/11/08

Aileen Clarke Hernandez joined Howard University's NAACP chapter, where she met activist Pauli Murray. Together, they boycotted a restaurant near campus that did not allow black students to dine inside. They also protested the segregated seating at a local theater, with support from actress Ingrid Bergman, who was set to star in a play there. Clarke Hernandez edited *The Hilltop* student newspaper, and was active in the Howard Players theater group. She was mentored by political science professor Emmett E. Dorsey, who chose her as his research associate after she graduated magna cum laude in 1947. Soon after, she was hospitalized with tuberculosis; and, upon recovering, moved home to New York City to pursue a master's degree at New York University. However, Clarke Hernandez left before graduation to join the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union training program, where she was one of four women. She describes her experiences as a union organizer, and the conditions in garment factories at the time.

Video Oral History Interview with Aileen Clarke Hernandez, Section A2007_134_001_011, TRT: 11:03:08 2013/11/08

Aileen Clarke Hernandez was promoted in 1958 to director of education and training for the West Coast region of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU). With the California Democratic Council, she organized ILGWU rallies in support of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy's presidential campaign in 1960. She also joined the Federation of Union Representatives; and, after negotiations for better pay soured, quit her position at the ILGWU. In 1962, Clarke Hernandez worked on Alan M. Cranston's campaign for California state controller. She also worked with Congressman Augustus F. "Gus" Hawkins and politician William Byron Rumford to pass

the California Fair Employment Practices Act of 1959 and California Fair Housing Act of 1963; and, through these connections, was nominated as assistant chief of the Fair Employment Practices Commission. Then, in 1965, President Lyndon Baines Johnson appointed her to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which had been formed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Video Oral History Interview with Aileen Clarke Hernandez, Section B2007_134_001_001, TRT: 0:28:24 2007/04/12

Aileen Clarke Hernandez was the sole female appointee to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in 1965. She worked alongside Republicans Samuel C. Jackson and Richard A. Graham, minister Luther Holcomb, and EEOC chairman Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Jr. They deliberated on thousands of employment discrimination cases brought by the NAACP, as well as sex discrimination cases like *Evenson v. Northwest Airlines, Inc.* Despite Clarke Hernandez's efforts, the EEOC lacked the resources to enforce the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Frustrated with deadlock in the EEOC, activists Pauli Murray and Betty Friedan tried to file a complaint with the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women, but were rebuffed. In June of 1966, they founded the National Organization for Women (NOW) to mobilize women nationally to combat sex discrimination. By its first convention in October, NOW had over three hundred members. In November of 1966, Clarke Hernandez resigned from the EEOC to focus her efforts on NOW.

Video Oral History Interview with Aileen Clarke Hernandez, Section B2007_134_001_001E, TRT:

Video Oral History Interview with Aileen Clarke Hernandez, Section B2007_134_001_002, TRT: 0:29:35 2007/04/12

Aileen Clarke Hernandez left the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to become the executive vice president for the West Coast region of the National Organization of Women (NOW) in 1966. Her departure enabled Northwest Airlines to claim bias in her ruling of gender discrimination in *Evenson v. Northwest Airlines, Inc.*, and the case was thrown out. From 1970 to 1971,

Clarke Hernandez served as the second president of NOW. In this role, she supported the Equal Rights Amendment, and emphasized racial inclusivity in the struggle for women's rights. In 1975, she participated an international conference in Germany, where she lectured on racial integration in German cities. During this time, Clarke Hernandez founded Hernandez and Associates, a consulting firm focused on urban human rights issues, through which she organized community forums and trained companies like the United Parcel Service of America, Inc. in diversity. She also recalls the divisions in NOW over issues like labor equality and abortion.

Video Oral History Interview with Aileen Clarke Hernandez, Section B2007_134_001_003, TRT: 0:29:00 2007/04/12

Aileen Clarke Hernandez initiated a grassroots call to action in California following the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China in 1995. She held a conference at San Francisco State University in 1996, which was attended by over two hundred women's organization representatives. With Clarke Hernandez as chairwoman, they developed the California Women's Agenda, which sought to foster organizational cooperation and increase women's political representation. They also addressed issues of violence against women in the California legislature and globally, in countries such as Uganda and Afghanistan. Later, Clarke Hernandez and the California Civil Rights Coalition rallied health organizations to defend the collection of racial and gender based health data, which was critical for evaluating California's affirmative action policies. Clarke Hernandez also reflects upon her life and legacy, her family, her hopes and concerns for the African American community and how she would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Aileen Clarke Hernandez, Section B2007_134_001_004, TRT: 0:29:23 2007/04/12

Aileen Clarke Hernandez was invited by former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt to attend the Presidential Conference on the Status of Women in 1966. At the meeting, Clarke Hernandez described the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's inability to protect women's rights in the workforce. Following the

conference, Clarke Hernandez met with the members to form a plan of action. They laid the groundwork for the National Organization for Women (NOW), for which activists Pauli Murray and Betty Friedan wrote the statement of purpose. Hernandez was elected as the second president of NOW in 1970; and, in this role, focused on the inclusion of poor women and women of color. During her presidency, NOW fought discriminatory practices in the airline and telecommunications industries, as well as in cultural norms. In 1979, Clarke Hernandez left NOW, frustrated with the organization's abandonment of her initiatives to combat racial discrimination. She also reflects upon the successes of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Video Oral History Interview with Aileen Clarke Hernandez, Section B2007_134_001_005, TRT: 0:29:24 2007/04/12

Aileen Clarke Hernandez organized a symposium within the National Organization for Women (NOW) at the conclusion of her presidency in 1971. The meeting addressed the importance of integrating women from all racial and economic backgrounds into the organization, and of fostering collaboration with other advocacy groups in support of social justice and human rights causes. Clarke Hernandez reflects upon the history of NOW and the women's rights movement, and upon her career as an advocate for human rights. She talks about the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, as well as Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton's presidential candidacy. She also describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Aileen Clarke Hernandez, Section B2007_134_001_006, TRT: 0:29:50 2007/04/12

Aileen Clarke Hernandez reflects upon her legacy, family and how she would like to be remembered. She also narrates her photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Aileen Clarke Hernandez, Section B2007_134_001_007, TRT: 0:16:01 2007/04/12

Aileen Clarke Hernandez narrates her photographs.