

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Janet L. Sims-Wood

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Sims-Wood, Janet L., 1945-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Janet L. Sims-Wood,
Dates:	April 24, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:46:00).
Abstract:	Historian and reference librarian Janet L. Sims-Wood (1945 -) served as Assistant Chief Librarian for Reference, Reader Services for the Moorland Spingarn Research Center at Howard University. Sims-Wood was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 24, 2007, in Largo, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_159
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Historian, publisher, and reference librarian Janet Louise Sims-Wood was born on May 22, 1945 in Rutherfordton, North Carolina to Marvin and Hazel Sims. Sims-Wood attended Carver High School where she worked in the school library. At the encouragement of her school librarian, she attended college at North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina, receiving her B.S. degree in sociology with a minor in library science in 1967. Sims-Wood worked in several Washington, D.C. libraries until a supervisor cautioned her that she would not advance without a master's degree. She enrolled at the University of Maryland

where, in 1972, she received her M.L.S. degree. Sims-Wood later completed twenty-one hours in African American history at Howard University before earning her Ph.D. in 1994 in women's studies, history and oral history from Union Institute in Cincinnati, Ohio. She also holds a ministerial diploma from the Spirit of Faith (SOF) Bible Institute in Temple Hills, Maryland.

Sims-Wood began her career in library science in 1972 as a Reader's Advisor in the Black Studies Division of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library in Washington, D.C. This experience led to her interest and specialization in African American history. In 1974, Sims-Wood became an assistant reference librarian at Moorland Spingarn Research Center at Howard University. She was appointed to Assistant Chief Librarian for Reference, Reader Services of the Moorland Spingarn Research Center in 1987, a position she held until her retirement in 2005. Sims-Wood has taught black women's history courses at the University of Maryland, and has served as a children's librarian with the Washington, D.C. Public Library System. She worked part-time for Prince George's Community College Library. Sims-Wood was part of a team of librarians who provide online services through a nation-wide 24/7 virtual reference program called AskUsNow.

Sims-Wood is a founding associate editor of *SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women* which published the anthology *Double Stitch: Black Women Write About Mothers and Daughters*. She was the founder of a small publishing company, Afro Resources, Inc., which published a 1993 calendar depicting black women who served in the Women's Army Corps during World War II. Sims-Wood has served as a consultant to several publishers and agencies, including Carlson Publishing Company's Black Women in America series and the American Girl's Addy doll and book series. Sims-Wood has also served as a bibliographer for the annual Black History Month kits of the Association for the Study of American Life and History. She is a life member and has held several executive positions in the Association for the Study of American Life and History and the Association of Black Women Historians.

Janet Sims-Wood was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on April 24, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Janet L. Sims-Wood was conducted by Denise Gines on April 24, 2007, in Largo, Maryland, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Historian and reference librarian Janet L. Sims-Wood (1945 -) served as Assistant Chief Librarian for Reference, Reader Services for the

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:

Sims-Wood, Janet L., 1945-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Sims-Wood, Janet L., 1945---Interviews

African American librarians--Washington (D.C.)--Interviews.

African American historians--Interviews

African American publishers--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Howard University. Moorland-Spingarn Research Center

Occupations:

Historian

Reference Librarian

HistoryMakers® Category:

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 Janet L. Sims-Wood, April 24, 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).

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 Janet L. Sims-Wood, Section A2007_159_001_001, TRT: 0:28:50 2007/04/24

Janet L. Sims-Wood was born on May 22, 1945 in Rutherfordton, North Carolina to Hazel Jeffries Sims and Marvin L. Sims, Sr. Her mother was born in 1914 in Rutherford County, North Carolina to laundress Pearl Hampton Jeffries and mill worker Thomas Jeffries. Eventually, Sims-Wood's maternal grandparents bought a farm in Cliffside, North Carolina, where they raised vegetables and cotton. Sims-Wood helped her grandmother tend to the fields during the summers. Her father, who was also a native of Rutherford County, was

born in 1908, and worked in a cotton mill before becoming a brick mason. Sims-Wood's parents met at Zion Hill A.M.E. Zion Church in Henrietta, North Carolina, and raised Sims-Woods and her four siblings in the integrated, rural community of Avondale, North Carolina. She attended the segregated Forest City-Dunbar Elementary School in Forest City, North Carolina, where she flourished as a student under her attentive teachers. She describes once attending a performance of the North Carolina Symphony.

African American families--North Carolina.

African Americans--Social life and customs--North Carolina.

Employment--North Carolina.

Segregation--North Carolina--Avondale.

Cotton manufacture.

Video Oral History Interview with Janet L. Sims-Wood, Section A2007_159_001_002, TRT: 0:28:30 2007/04/24

Janet L. Sims-Wood's father, a brick mason, built her family's home in 1955 on land bought from Sims-Wood's maternal grandparents, Pearl Hampton Jeffries and Thomas Jeffries, in Henrietta, North Carolina. Sims-Wood attended Carver High School in Spindale, North Carolina, where her teachers included Ulysses G. Whitworth, E.D. Roberts and Hortense Potts. She read biographies of Mary McLeod Bethune and newspapers like The Charlotte Observer and Spartanburg Herald-Journal; and listened to the music of Little Richard, Fats Domino and Martha and the Vandellas. Upon graduating in 1963, Sims-Wood attended North Carolina Central College in Durham, where she participated in civil rights protests, voter registration drives and student government. After graduating in 1967, she moved to Washington, D.C., where she worked at the Communications Satellite Corporation, the Library of Congress and Congressional Quarterly, Inc., before enrolling to study library science at the University of Maryland in 1970.

Education, Secondary—North Carolina.

Library science—Vocational guidance.

Education, Higher.

Civil rights movements.

North Carolina Central University.

Voter registration--North Carolina.

Video Oral History Interview with Janet L. Sims-Wood, Section
A2007_159_001_003, TRT: 0:29:20 2007/04/24

Janet L. Sims-Wood attended the University of Maryland in College Park, Maryland from 1970 to 1972; and, upon graduating, worked at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library in Washington, D.C. In 1974, Sims-Wood joined the staff of Washington D.C.'s Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, where she met historians John Hope Franklin, John W. Blassingame and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn. She published her first academic article in *The Journal of Negro Education* in 1975; and her first book, 'The Progress of Afro-American Women: A Selected Bibliography,' in 1980. She also wrote a bibliography on the Ku Klux Klan with Lenwood G. Davis, and assisted with Jessie Carney Smith's research on notable black women. From the 1980s, Sims-Wood pursued a Ph.D. degree at Union Institute and University in Cincinnati, Ohio. For her dissertation, she interviewed black women like Dovey Johnson Roundtree, Charity Adams Earley, Martha Settle Putney and Clementine Skinner, who served in the Women's Army Corps during World War II.

African Americans--Study and teaching.

Association for the Study of African-American Life and History.

African American historians.

Howard University. Moorland-Spingarn Research Center.

United States. Army. Women's Army Corps.

Video Oral History Interview with Janet L. Sims-Wood, Section
A2007_159_001_004, TRT: 0:28:10 2007/04/24

Janet L. Sims-Wood co-founded SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women with Ruby Nell Sales, Patricia Bell Scott and Beverly Guy-Sheftall in 1984. She also published 'The Psychology and Mental Health of Afro-American Women' with her sister, Glenell Sims Young;

and a calendar featuring African American members of the Women's Army Corps, such as Charity Adams Earley. Sims-Wood earned her Ph.D. degree in 1994 from the Union Institute and University in Cincinnati, Ohio. In the late 1990s, she assisted in the creation of the first American Girl doll of African descent, Addy Walker. Sims-Wood also belonged to the Maryland Humanities Council, where she collected Dovey Johnson Roundtree's and John Hope Franklin's firsthand accounts of the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka decision, and attended a conference where Joseph A. De Laine, Jr. and B. B. De Laine spoke about the reprisals against their father's protests for school desegregation, including the burning of their family's home.

African American women historians.

United States. Army. Women's Army Corps.

Dolls in popular culture.

Oral history.

American Girl (Firm).

African American women--Periodicals.

Video Oral History Interview with Janet L. Sims-Wood, Section
A2007_159_001_005, TRT: 0:29:10 2007/04/24

Janet L. Sims-Wood received a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities to complete her dissertation on African American women in the Women's Army Corps. At the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center in Washington, D.C., Sims-Wood oversaw an oral history project on the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Additionally, she contributed to Ralph Carlson's sixteen volume series on African American women, recorded veterans' oral histories for the Very Special Arts organization in Washington, D.C. and conducted research on the women of the Harlem Renaissance through a Carnegie-Whitney Grant. In 2001, Sims-Wood began working as a part-time reference desk librarian at Prince George's Community College in Largo, Maryland. At the time of the interview, she attended the Spirit of Faith Christian Center in Temple Hills, Maryland, and was in the process of establishing a library at the Spirit of Faith Bible Institute. She reflects upon her life, and the challenges of teaching research

skills.

African American families--Maryland.

History--Sources--Study and teaching (Higher).

Internet in higher education.

Academic libraries.

African Americans--Religion.

Video Oral History Interview with Janet L. Sims-Wood, Section
A2007_159_001_006, TRT: 0:22:00 2007/04/24

Janet L. Sims-Wood created the Kids' Black History on the Net project to increase children's access to online resources for African American history. She belonged to the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, the graduate chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and the Association of Black Women Historians, where her colleagues included Rosalyn Terborg-Penn and Nell Irvin Painter. In 2005, Sims-Wood received the Lorraine Anderson Williams Leadership Award from the Association of Black Women Historians. She reflects upon her career, her battle with breast cancer and her message to future generations. Sims-Wood concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

Association of Black Women Historians (U.S.).

Breast--Cancer--Patients.

African American women--Sororities.

Internet research.