

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dr. Josephine English

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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>	English, Josephine, 1920-2011
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Josephine English,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 8, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	3 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:25:50).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Gynecologist Dr. Josephine English (1920 - 2011 ) delivered thousands of babies, including the daughter of former U.S. Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown and the six daughters of Malcolm X and Betty Shabazz. She established the Adelphi Medical Center and Brooklyn's Paul Robeson Theatre. English was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 8, 2007, in Brooklyn, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_227
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Gynecologist Dr. Josephine English was born on December 17, 1920 in Ontario, Virginia to Whittie, Sr. and Jennie English. She grew up in Englewood, New Jersey and received her B.A. degree from New York City's Hunter College in 1939. English went on to earn her M.A. degree in psychology from New York University. She attended Meharry Medical School in Nashville, Tennessee and while there, became interested in obstetrics and gynecology. English graduated from medical school in 1949 and began working at a hospital in Manhattan.

In 1956, English moved to Brooklyn, and in 1958, she opened a women's clinic in Bushwick. Over the years, she has delivered thousands of babies, including the daughter of former U.S. Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown and the six daughters of Malcolm X and Betty Shabazz. In 1979, English established the Adelphi Medical Center to provide better medical care to both men and women. She soon added a senior citizens' center. In 1981, she started the Up the Ladder Day Care Center and After School Program and a summer youth camp. Her work continued in 1982 when, in an effort to bring more of the arts to the community, she purchased a deserted church next to the Adelphi Medical Center and converted it into Brooklyn's Paul Robeson Theater. In 1986, English became the first minority and the first woman to be awarded a license from the New York State Department of Health to develop a free-standing ambulatory surgical center.

Due to budget issues English self-funded many of her programs and has had to continuously fight foreclosure. The Brooklyn community stood behind English, and she has been honored with several awards, including the African Community Contribution Award and a Lucille Mason Rose Community Activist Award. In 1996, Brooklynites formed the Dr. Josephine English Foundation in order to honor English and to carry on her health and welfare initiatives.

Dr. English passed away on December 18, 2011 at the age of 91.

Dr. Josephine English was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 8, 2007.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dr. Josephine English was conducted by Adrienne Jones on August 8, 2007, in Brooklyn, New York, and was recorded on 3 Betacame SP videocassettes. Gynecologist Dr. Josephine English (1920 - 2011 ) delivered thousands of babies, including the daughter of former U.S. Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown and the six daughters of Malcolm X and Betty Shabazz. She established the Adelphi Medical Center and Brooklyn's Paul Robeson Theatre.

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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:

English, Josephine, 1920-2011

Jones, Adrienne (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

English, Josephine, 1920-2011 --Interviews

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African American women physicians--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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Adelphi Medical Center

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## Occupations:

Gynecologist

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

MedicalMakers

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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 Dr. Josephine English, August 8, 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 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 Dr. Josephine English, Section A2007\_227\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:43 ?

Dr. Josephine English was born on December 17, 1920 in Ontario, Virginia to Jennie English and Whittie English, Sr. Her mother was also from Ontario, and worked as a teacher; while her father was born to a former slave in Columbia, South Carolina, and moved north as a teenager. English was raised in Englewood, New Jersey, where her father worked in construction. She began her education at Englewood's Lincoln School, and went on to attend the integrated Dwight Morrow High School, where her peers included wealthy, white students like Malcolm Forbes. After graduating, she completed a degree in French at New York City's Hunter College in 1937, and then earned a master's degree in psychology at New York University. Planning to specialize in psychiatry, English enrolled at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee, where she switched to obstetrics and gynecology. After graduating in 1949, she completed her medical internship at Harlem Hospital, where she treated numerous cervical cancer patients.

African American families--New Jersey.

Single parent families--New Jersey.

African Americans--Education (Higher).

African Americans in medicine.

Gynecology--Study and teaching.

Obstetrics--Study and teaching.

Hunter College.

New York University.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Josephine English, Section A2007\_227\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Dr. Josephine English joined the staff of New York City's Harlem Hospital in 1949. She worked there for four years, and was mentored by African American doctors like Aubrey de Lambert Maynard. During this time, English lived in the Harlem community, where she attended productions by the Negro Ensemble Company and the Roger Furman Theater. Then, English opened a medical practice in the Bushwick neighborhood of Brooklyn, where she and Dr. Pearl Romeo were the only black female gynecologists in the borough. English's patients included Alma Arrington Brown, the wife of politician Ron Brown; and Betty Shabazz, the wife of Malcolm X. She eventually moved her practice to Brooklyn's Fort Greene neighborhood, where she opened the Adelphi Medical Center. In addition to providing healthcare, the center coordinated public health campaigns, a senior center and a daycare. In 1980, English founded Brooklyn's Paul Robeson Theatre, which staged the works of black playwrights like Ntozake Shange and Jeff Stetson.

X, Malcolm, 1925-1965.

Shabazz, Betty.

Brown, Ron, 1941-1996.

Harlem Hospital (New York, N.Y.).

Community Health Centers--New York (State)--New York.

African American theater--New York (State)--New York.

African Americans--Medical care.

African Americans--Health and hygiene.

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Josephine English, Section A2007\_227\_001\_003, TRT:

0:26:57 ?

Dr. Josephine English founded the Paul Robeson Theatre in Brooklyn, New York. There, she staged plays with the help of her youngest son, Michael Sheppard. She also joined New York City's Coalition of Theatres of Color, which was led by director Woodie King, Jr.; and worked with the coalition to maintain the Paul Robeson Theatre's prominence over the years. In her career as a gynecologist, English became acquainted with black physicians like Dr. Harold Freeman, Dr. Muriel Petioni and Dr. Beny J. Primm. She also founded the Dr. Josephine English Foundation to raise awareness about diseases that disproportionately affected the African American community. English closed the Adelphi Medical Center in the 1990s, after the city government levied fines of \$500,000 against it. She talks about the future of the medical profession, including the decline in personal relationships between physicians and patients. English also reflects upon her life and legacy, and narrates her photographs.

African American theater--New York (State)--New York.

African Americans in medicine.

King, Woodie.

African Americans--Medical care.

African Americans--Health and hygiene.

Freeman, Harold P.

Primm, Beny J.