Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers®
          1900 S. Michigan Avenue
          Chicago, Illinois 60616
          info@thehistorymakers.com
          www.thehistorymakers.com

Creator: English, Josephine Dr.

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Josephine English,

Dates: August 8, 2007

Bulk Dates: 2007

Physical Description: 3 Betacam SP videocassettes (1:27:50).

Abstract: Community leader and gynecologist Dr. Josephine English (1920 - ) 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. 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.

Identification: A2007_227

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Community leader and 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. Josephine English was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on August 8, 2007.

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 Betacam SP videocassettes. Community leader and gynecologist Dr. Josephine English (1920 - ) 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. She established the Adelphi Medical Center and Brooklyn's Paul Robeson Theatre.

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:

Dr. Josephine English.

Jones, Adrienne (Interviewer).

Burghhelea, Neculai (Videographer).

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews.
Dr. Josephine English--Interviews.
African American women physicians--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Paul Robeson Theater (New York, N.Y.)

Adelphi Medical Center

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

MedicalMakers

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


Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 8/25/2011 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, August 8, 2007

Video Oral History Interview with Dr. Josephine English, Section A2007_227_001_001, TRT: 0:29:43 2007/08/08

Dr. Josephine English slates the interview and lists her favorites. She provides information about her parents, Jennie and Wittie English, Sr. Jennie worked as a teacher until her death and Wittie was in construction and worked on the Holland Tunnel. English recalls meeting her great grandfather who was a slave in South Carolina and her community in Englewood, New Jersey. English lived in a predominately African American community that was located near the town dump. She notes that as a teen she had wanted to become a teacher, but after her undergraduate studies at Hunter College in Latin and French, she decided that she wanted to pursue a M.A. degree in psychology at New York University. English attended Meharry College in Nashville, Tennessee for her M.D. degree and did her internship and specialized in OB/GYN at Harlem Hospital.

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 2007/08/08

Dr. Josephine English talks about her experience at Harlem Hospital, which served a predominantly African American population. She recalls the main issues that affected the African American community of the 1950s and the vibrant theater life in Harlem. English left Harlem to move to Brooklyn to start a women's clinic, where she had patients such as Malcolm X's and Ron Brown's wives. She notes that she became close with Betty Shabazz and remembers Malcolm as being a devoted husband. In 1979, she established the Adelphi Medical Center to serve the broader community. English worked with the cultural center to educate people about health issues, and to provide treatment and preventive care. Eventually, she opened a day care and senior center to meet the needs of those groups. English discusses the establishment of the Paul Robeson Theater.

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: 0:28:57 2007/08/08

Dr. Josephine English speaks about the impact of the Paul Robeson Theater and
theater in general. She hopes that more young people, specifically African American youth will value the theater. One of the ways that she suggests to make theater more relevant to African Americans is to write plays that show African American experiences. English reflects on the contribution of Woodie King to African American theater and to her work. While creating the Paul Robeson Theater she stopped practicing medicine and the city closed down her centers. Although she no longer practices medicine, she comments on helping to improve physician follow-up and physician care and in 1996, community members created the Dr. Josephine English Foundation to continue her educational mission. Some of the prominent physicians in New York that she either knew or knew of included Dr. Harold Freeman, Dr. Muriel Petioni and Dr. Benny J. Primm. She narrates personal photos.

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.