Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Vivian R. Johnson

Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers®
1900 S. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60616
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Creator: Johnson, Vivian R.

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Vivian R. Johnson,

Dates: September 13, 2007

Bulk Dates: 2007

Physical Description: 5 Betacam SP videocassettes (2:28:05).

Abstract: Education professor Vivian R. Johnson (1935 - ) was a member of the faculty at Boston University’s School of Education as an Associate Clinical Professor in the Department of Administration, Training, and Policy Studies. Johnson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 13, 2007, in Newton Center, Massachusetts. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

Identification: A2007_260

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Education professor Vivian R. Johnson was born in Chicago, Illinois and grew up in Los Angeles, California where she graduated from Polytechnic High School in 1952 and entered the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA). In 1955, she became the first African American elected as a Women’s Representative on the Student Council. Influenced by the UCLA University Religious Conference (URC), Johnson was chosen to participate in the URC sponsored Project India in 1953 where she worked with Indian students to build a one-room school house in a village near Calcutta, India. Following receipt of her B.A. degree in English/Speech from UCLA in 1956 and a year of graduate studies, she traveled to the East Coast with her husband, Willard R. Johnson. For four years, she served as a scholarship assistant placing students from newly independent African nations in American universities for the Africa-American Institute in Washington, D.C. and Harvard University’s African Scholarship Program of American Universities.

From 1968 to 1972, Johnson served as a social studies curriculum writer for the Newton Massachusetts Public Schools. In Boston, Massachusetts, she founded a resource center on African American culture and directed Reading is Yours to Keep, Inc. from 1973 to 1978 in which parents were trained to tutor students. In 1974, she received the Certificate of Advanced Study and in 1975 the Doctorate in Education in Administration, Planning and Social Policy from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

From 1976 to 1980, Johnson served as a consultant to a number of educational institutions including multicultural film evaluation for WGBH Boston, curriculum development for University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University College and school-staff development for Boston University’s African Studies Outreach Program. After serving as Co-Director of the Collaborative Planning Study for the College and University Planning Program with the Boston Public Schools, in 1980, Johnson began a six-year tenure as the Campus Coordinator for Boston.
University School of Medicine’s Strengthening Health Delivery Systems Program operating in twenty countries in central and west Africa.

In 1987, Johnson was a Scholar in Residence at the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center in Bellagio, Italy, where she completed the book "West African governments and volunteer development organizations : priorities for partnership," co-authored with her husband. In 1989, she joined the faculty at Boston University’s School of Education as an Associate Clinical Professor in the Department of Administration, Training and Policy Studies. During her time at Boston University, Johnson received the prestigious Fulbright Summer Seminar Award to study multicultural education in Indonesia.

After retiring from Boston University as Associate Professor Emerita in 2003, Johnson’s work in her specialties continued. In 2005, she joined her colleagues in teaching a summer course in Geneva, Switzerland, and she co-authored a book on family, school and community partnership in education published in 2007.

Throughout her career, Johnson has been involved with numerous civic organizations including serving on the Board of Directors of the Trust for Public Land, National Audubon Society, Oxfam America and the National Center of Afro-American Artists.

Vivian R. Johnson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on September 13, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Vivian R. Johnson was conducted by Crowe, Larry on September 13, 2007, in Newton Center, Massachusetts, and was recorded on 5 Betacam SP videocassettes. Education professor Vivian R. Johnson (1935 - ) was a member of the faculty at Boston University’s School of Education as an Associate Clinical Professor in the Department of Administration, Training, and Policy Studies.

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:

Johnson, Vivian R., 1935-
Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)
Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Johnson, Vivian R., 1935---Interviews

African American women educators--Interviews

African American women educators--Massachusetts--Boston

African American educators--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Boston University. School of Education

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


Processing Information
This interview collection was processed and encoded on 8/22/2011 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, September 13, 2007


Vivian R. Johnson discusses her family history, particularly her mother’s family, the Wilsons. Her mother’s family first came to Arkansas as slaves. Many of the family including Dr. Johnson’s grandfather, Joseph Wilson attended Arkansas A & M in Pinebluff, Arkansas. Joseph Wilson and Dr. Johnson were very close. Her middle name—Josephine— was given in honor of her grandfather. She does not know a lot about her father’s family. He worked as a handyman and lived most his life in Chicago, Illinois. Her paternal aunt, Myrtle Robinson, a teacher, greatly influenced Dr. Johnson and instilled within her a love of teaching and education.

African Americans--Arkansas--History.
Arkansas Agricultural and Mechanical College.
African American families.
African American fathers.
African American education--History.
African American grandfathers.
Slavery--Arkansas.

Video Oral History Interview with Vivian R. Johnson, Section A2007_260_001_002, TRT: 0:30:01 2007/09/13

Vivian R. Johnson recalls her childhood years growing up in Chicago, Illinois, Lake Park, Louisiana, and Los Angeles, California. When she was three, her parents divorced. At that time, the family resided in Lake Park, Louisiana and she attended 36th Street Elementary School, a segregated school. Dr. Johnson recounts the story of how her mother, Lillian Wilson, met her second husband, Herman Miller in Louisiana. Dr. Johnson informed her mother over Sunday dinner that Lillian should marry Herman Miller. When Dr. Johnson was seven, Lillian married Herman in Chicago. The family moved to Los Angeles and Dr. Johnson’s contact with her father became sporadic. Her earliest memory is of women of Lake Park, Louisiana giving her scraps of fabric so that Dr. Johnson could create doll clothes. Dr. Johnson remembers her first sights of Los Angeles, which included the bright California sun and the wide ethnic diversity.

African American Families--Louisiana.

Vivian R. Johnson recounts growing up in Los Angeles, California. She attended 36th Street Elementary School and her fourth grade teacher Miss Bright gave her a love and an appreciation of libraries. Dr. Johnson developed a voracious appetite for books and reading. She read many African American newspapers and books from African American publishing houses. Her stepfather, Herman, ran a café on Western Avenue in Los Angeles where Dr. Johnson interacted with African American actors.


Vivian R. Johnson remembers her adolescence, attending Polytechnic High School in Los Angeles, California. She became involved with the debate team and discovered she had an interest in discourse and discussion. She graduated in 1952 and enrolled at the University of California, Los Angeles. She became involved in the University Religious Conference (URC). Through the URC she met Dr. James Robinson, the minister at the Church of the Master in Harlem, a neighborhood of New York City, New York. She became involved with Dr. Robinson with Project India and traveled to India for six weeks doing good works.


Vivian R. Johnson recounts the six weeks she spent in India with Project India and the University Religious Conference (URC) when she was a sophomore at the University of California, Los Angeles. She felt a kinship with the people of India and their struggle for independence. Johnson remembers how the Indian students were very informed about the political situation and the racial injustices in the United States. She remembers the leader of the group, Ms. Gunther, an extraordinary woman who would have been a great leader if she were born a generation later.