Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Phyllis Hicks

Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616
info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator: Hicks, Phyllis
Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Phyllis Hicks,
Dates: October 5, 2007
Bulk Dates: 2007
Physical Description: 5 Betacam SP videocassettes (2:17:51).
Abstract: Newspaper marketing director and nonprofit administrator Phyllis Hicks (1943 - ) is the marketing director and columnist for the Omaha Star newspaper. She volunteered for thirty years for the Omaha Opportunities Industrialization Centers, Inc. Hicks was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 5, 2007, in Omaha, Nebraska. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification: A2007_279
Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Newspaper marketing director and nonprofit administrator Phyllis Jean Mosley Hicks was born on March 7, 1943 in Omaha, Nebraska to Juanita Agee Mosley and James P. Mosley, Jr. Hicks’ civic-minded grandmother, Emma Lee Agee, was a 1919 member of the church pastored by Reverend Earl Little (Malcolm X’s father) and was a childhood friend of the National Baptist Convention’s controversial Reverend Joseph H. Jackson, as well as Whitney M. Young, Jr. Her paternal grandfather Rev. J. P. Mosley Sr. led a demonstration to integrate the swimming pools in 1954 in Chillicothe, Missouri. Whitney M. Young was president of the Omaha Urban League, where Hick's mother worked as his personal secretary. Her mother played trumpet in an all girl band and her father was a saxophone player. Hicks studied piano and voice for several years and she was a member of the Elks Drill Team. She attended Long and Howard Kennedy elementary schools. Hicks was a member of NAACP Youth Chapter, worked on the school paper and was a member of the journalism club and the yearbook staff at Omaha Technical High School. Graduating in 1961, she attended Peru State Teachers College.

Married in 1963, Hicks took a job with the Power Electric Company and volunteered for Omaha Opportunities Industrialization Centers, Inc. (OIC). Hired by OIC in 1967, she produced eight pageants for the organization in addition to serving in as instructor and in an administrative role for thirty years. Hicks joined Sitel Corporation in 1998 as a quality assurance representative and trainer. Employed at CSG Systems, Inc., she served as product support analyst through 2005 when she retired.

Marketing director for the "Omaha Star," the oldest and only African American newspaper in Omaha, Hicks also writes a column called “It’s Just My Opinion” for the publication. She is the founder and mentor to “The Stepping Saints,” a local drill team. Hicks is the recipient of the Woman of the Year, the Black Heritage Award, OIC’s Thirty Year Service Award and the City of Omaha’s Living the Dream Award at the 2002 Martin Luther King, Jr.
Celebration.

Phyllis Hicks was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on October 5, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Phyllis Hicks was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 5, 2007, in Omaha, Nebraska, and was recorded on 5 Betacam SP videocassettes. Newspaper marketing director and nonprofit administrator Phyllis Hicks (1943 - ) is the marketing director and columnist for the Omaha Star newspaper. She volunteered for thirty years for the Omaha Opportunities Industrialization Centers, Inc.

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:

Phyllis Hicks
Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)
Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Phyllis Hicks--Interviews
African American businesspeople--Interviews.

African American women civic leaders--Interviews.

**Organizations:**

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Omaha Star

Omaha Opportunities Industrialization Centers, Inc.

**HistoryMakers® Category:**

MediaMakers

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 Phyllis Hicks, October 5, 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 11/21/2011 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.
Phyllis Hicks discusses her family background growing up in Omaha, Nebraska. She recalls her maternal grandmother's discussion about membership at Earl Little's (Malcolm X's father) church when the Ku Klux Klan in Omaha came to burn the church down because of Earl Little's activism. The members had to hide in the basement of the church to avoid harm by the Ku Klux Klan. She states that her maternal grandmother has a street named after her in Omaha, Nebraska and her mother was secretary to Whitney M. Young. Hicks describes her paternal side of family as a family of ministers and activists. Her paternal grandfather led demonstrations so that African Americans could swim at a local swimming pool in 1954. Hick's paternal grandmother worked as a domestic worker and a cook. Hicks ends the interview segment by describing how she enjoyed visiting the housing projects in Omaha because that was where all the children lived.

African American families--Nebraska--Omaha.
African American churches--Nebraska--Omaha.
African American grandparents--Nebraska--Omaha.
African American parents--Nebraska--Omaha.
African American fathers--Nebraska--Omaha.
African American ministers--Nebraska--Omaha.
African American children--Nebraska--Omaha.
Racism.
Ku Klux Klan (1915--).
Political activists.
Demonstrations.

Phyllis Hicks recounts her childhood experiences of briefly living in San Francisco, California while her father, James P. Mosley completed basic training for the army. She describes how her parents met in high school and that both were musicians. Hicks' mother played the trumpet and her father played the saxophone. Her father played in the military and traveled extensively throughout the world. Hicks shares that she is the product of both parents who made an impact on her personal development. From her parents' influence and encouragement, Hicks played the piano for twelve years and learned how to read and play other musical instruments. She ends the segment of the interview by describing how music was her favorite subject in school and a great majority of her teachers lived in her neighborhood.

African American children--Nebraska--Omaha.
African American fathers.
African American families--Nebraska--Omaha.
African American musicians--Nebraska--Omaha.
African American neighborhoods--Nebraska--Omaha.
Phyllis Hicks shares her educational experiences. Hicks states that she remained active throughout school with her involvement with the school choir, student council, journalism club and class treasurer. She mentions her activity with the NAACP youth group and also provided an account of when she formed an alliance with the football players from Omaha Technical High School in order to integrate a community swimming pool. She was very eager to attend Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, but her mother advised against her attending because of Hicks' intense level of activism. Her mother was afraid that Hicks would get killed in the South with her aggressive disposition. Hicks attended Peru Teacher's College in Peru, Nebraska. She ends the interview segment by providing a brief historical account of the racial climate of Omaha in relation to the 1919 lynching of Willie Brown in downtown Omaha.

Phyllis Hicks provides more information regarding the social implications around the lynching of Willie Brown. Her grandfather was an eyewitness to the lynching. Hicks talks about her early involvement with activism, her mail delivery job and dropping out of college. Hicks describes herself as a rebel who wanted to stay involved with activism and social change on some level throughout her life. She discusses her involvement with the Opportunities Industrial Center (OIC) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where she began as volunteer in 1966 and was later hired as a staff member in 1968. During her thirty year career at OIC, Hicks helped women with job skills and employment assistance. She was instrumental in producing eight pageants. Hicks ends the interview segment by discussing her retirement from OIC and how she started working for the Omaha Star newspaper as their marketing director.

Phyllis Hicks discusses her major hopes and concerns for the African American...
community of Omaha, Nebraska, including viable services for young people, thriving businesses and overall economic improvement. Hicks then provides a historical account of the Omaha riots in the late 1960s. She mentions the murder of a fourteen-year-old girl talks about how none of African American businesses were destroyed. Hicks talks about her involvement with the Black Empowerment Group, which aims to improve business opportunities and housing for African Americans in Omaha, Nebraska. Hicks ends the interview segment by discussing how she wants to be remembered as a person who assisted in helping to change to lives of others.

African American neighborhoods--Nebraska--Omaha.
Riots--Nebraska--Omaha--History--20th century.
African Americans--Nebraska--Omaha--Social life and customs.
African American businesspeople--Nebraska--Omaha.
Violence--Nebraska--Omaha--History--20th century.
African American women--Nebraska--Omaha.
African American women civic leaders--Nebraska--Omaha.
African Americans--Employment.