

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Patricia Turner

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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>	Turner, Patricia, 1944-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Patricia Turner,
<b>Dates:</b>	May 14, 2010
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2010
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:04:10).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Middle school teacher Patricia Turner (1944 - ) was a member of the Norfolk 17, who were instrumental in the desegregation of Virginia and the South. Turner was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 14, 2010, in Norfolk, Virginia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2010_022
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civil rights pioneer and educator Patricia Turner was born on October 11, 1944 in Norfolk, Virginia. Her father, James Turner, was a Navy Master Chief Petty Officer. Her brother, James Turner Jr., was two years younger than her and also a member of The Norfolk 17. In 1959, five years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, Turner and her brother entered Norview Junior High School, a previously all-white school. The siblings were two of the five students who attended Norview Junior High that year. After finishing eighth grade, Turner went to Norview High School where she graduated near the top of her class of over 400 seniors. She worked as a nurse before moving to Pennsylvania where she worked for the

Thomas Jefferson Hospital. She then moved back to Virginia and worked for Dr. Robert Johnson, a pediatrician.

She continued her education and attended Norfolk State University where she earned her B.S. degree in mathematics. She also received her M.S. degree in education from Old Dominion University and took classes toward a Ph.D. degree at the College of William and Mary. After obtaining her undergraduate degree, Turner began working for Norfolk Public Schools as a math teacher, teaching curriculum to sixth and seventh graders. She taught until her retirement in 2008. However, that same year she became the Director of Oakwood Academy. In 2009, she along with the other surviving members of the Norfolk 17 returned to Norview High School to celebrate the 50th anniversary of “massive resistance.”

For her work as an educator, she received many accolades, including her Honorary Doctorate in humane letters from Old Dominion University. She also received the School Bell Award in Education in 2000 and 2002. Turner is a member of the Black Press Hall of Fame.

Patricia Turner was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 14, 2010.

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## **Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Patricia Turner was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 14, 2010, in Norfolk, Virginia, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Middle school teacher Patricia Turner (1944 - ) was a member of the Norfolk 17, who were instrumental in the desegregation of Virginia and the South.

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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

## 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:

Turner, Patricia, 1944-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Turner, Patricia, 1944---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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Norfolk Public Schools (Norfolk, Va.)

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## Occupations:

Middle School Teacher

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

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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 Patricia Turner, May 14, 2010. 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).

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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 Patricia Turner, Section  
A2010\_022\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:45 ?

Patricia Turner was born on October 11, 1944 in Norfolk, Virginia to Marjorie Harrison Turner and James Turner, Sr. Her maternal family originated in Norfolk, where her great-grandmother, who was Cherokee, grew up. Turner's maternal grandfather, Henry Harrison, served in the U.S. military, while her grandmother, Hattie Jackson Harrison, raised their children in Norfolk on Church Street. Turner's paternal family were relatives of the revolutionary Nat Turner, who organized an effective slave rebellion in 1831 in Southampton County, Virginia. Many years later, her paternal grandfather married German immigrant Anzella Claude, and raised her father on a farm in Southampton County. Turner's grandfather died when her father was young, and her grandmother remarried. Her father went on to join the U.S. Navy, and met Turner's mother in Norfolk. He had one son by a previous marriage, and Turner's parents raised another six children, of whom Turner was the oldest.

Video Oral History Interview with Patricia Turner, Section  
A2010\_022\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:05 ?

Patricia Turner's family moved frequently during her early childhood, due to her father's career with the U.S. Navy. Her family eventually settled in segregated Norfolk, Virginia, where she often visited the South Drive-in Theater with her father. Turner began kindergarten at Titustown Elementary School, where she memorized her story books to avoid learning to read. After her family moved to Norfolk's Norview neighborhood, she enrolled at the segregated Oakwood Elementary School. Turner's third grade teacher, Ms. Kearney, discovered her aptitude for math, and encouraged her to tutor the other students. Turner completed the seventh grade at William Henry Ruffner Junior High School; and then, alongside her younger brother, James Turner, Jr., was selected to

integrate Norview Junior High School as part of the Norfolk 17. While most of the group were recruited by the NAACP, the Turners chose the school because it was within walking distance of their home. Turner also describes her sheltered upbringing.

Video Oral History Interview with Patricia Turner, Section A2010\_022\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:12 ?

Patricia Turner was about to enroll at the all-white Norview Junior High School in Norfolk, Virginia, when the governor closed the Norfolk Public Schools to stall integration. During the closure, she attended a makeshift school at Norfolk's First Baptist Church, where her teachers' salaries were provided by activist Vivian Carter Mason. Turner and the Norfolk 17 were also trained by the NAACP to ignore white aggressors, and to stay close to walls to protect themselves. On Turner's first day at Norview Junior High School, her mother instructed her to take care of her younger brother, James Turner, Jr. During their walk to school, they passed by the high school, where whites had gathered to protest. Although the police prevented them from throwing large rocks, the protesters hit Turner, her brother and their peers with small rocks and sticks. Due to the trauma of her experiences, Turner had few memories from Norview Junior High School. In high school, she was bullied and harassed by her teacher, Hal Bonney, Jr.

Video Oral History Interview with Patricia Turner, Section A2010\_022\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:03 ?

Patricia Turner attended the formerly all-white Norview High School in Norfolk, Virginia. Her classmates wrote slurs on her locker every day, but she only saw them once, because the head janitor removed the graffiti each morning. She was also shown kindness by the African American cafeteria staff and two white teachers. Turner befriended a white student whom she tutored during lunch; but, after he invited her to prom, his parents forced him to leave the state, and Turner's classmates voted to ban her from the dance. Although other African American students attended Norview High School, they were not allowed to enroll in classes together. Turner saw the other members of the Norfolk 17 during tutoring sessions at

Norfolk's First Baptist Church, and later befriended Andrew Heidelberg. Fifty years after graduation, Turner met her freshman homeroom teacher, Hal Bonney, Jr., who had become a judge, and he apologized for his abusive treatment of her.

Video Oral History Interview with Patricia Turner, Section A2010\_022\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:15 ?

Patricia Turner was among the first black students at Norview High School in Norfolk, Virginia. She joined the field hockey team, but the other schools refused to play if she participated in games. Turner graduated with honors, but feared attending college, as she expected her experiences of racial discrimination to continue. Instead, she decided to join the U.S. Marine Corps in Richmond, Virginia. After failing the medical examination, she remained in Richmond and married a U.S. Navy serviceman, whom she eventually divorced. She worked as a waitress for a time, and then became a ward clerk at the Thomas Jefferson University hospital in West Chester, Pennsylvania. She enrolled in the school's nursing program, and remarried. Turner divorced her second husband after four years, and then returned to Norfolk, where she worked for pediatrician Robert Johnson for ten years. Decades later, Turner was invited to a reunion at Norview High School, where many of her classmates apologized for their poor treatment of her.

Video Oral History Interview with Patricia Turner, Section A2010\_022\_001\_006, TRT: 0:16:30 ?

Patricia Turner matriculated at Norfolk State University in Norfolk, Virginia in 1983, at forty-one years old. She studied education; and, upon graduating, began teaching in the Norfolk Public Schools. In 1997, she received a master's degree from Norfolk's Old Dominion University. Turner continued to teach, and began coursework toward a doctoral degree from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, although she decided not to complete it after receiving an honorary doctorate from Old Dominion University in 2008. Turner talks about her philosophy of education, and her speaking engagements. She reflects upon her life and legacy, her hopes and concerns for the African American community and how

she would like to be remembered. Turner also talks about her family, including her late brother, James Turner, Jr.

Video Oral History Interview with Patricia Turner, Section  
A2010\_022\_001\_007, TRT: 0:20:20 ?

Patricia Turner narrates her photographs.