

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Naomi King

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	King, Naomi
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Naomi King,
Dates:	July 14, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:37:00).
Abstract:	Civil rights activist Naomi King (1931 -) was the wife of the late A.D. Williams King, brother to Martin Luther King, Jr. She and her husband supported the Civil Rights Movement. King received the SCLC Rosa Parks Freedom Award in January 2008. King was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 14, 2010, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_071
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civil rights activist Naomi King was born in Dothan, Alabama, on November 17, 1931 to a single mother, Bessie Barber Bailey. Her mother, a cook in a prominent Atlanta home, taught her social graces. King, educated in Atlanta Public Schools, excelled in French and English. As a young woman, King was often selected by local clothing stores as a preferred fashion model, at times featured in shop windows. King and her mother belonged to the Ebenezer Baptist Church, where Martin Luther King, Sr. served as senior pastor. At the church, King became acquainted with the pastor's children, and she caught the eye of his youngest son,

A.D.

In 1949, King entered Spelman College, where she spent a year studying French before marrying A.D. Williams King, Baptist minister, civil rights activist, and youngest son of Martin Luther King, Sr., in 1950. She later attended the University of Alabama and studied interior design. She would have five children: Alfred D.W. King III; Alveda King; Esther Darlene King; Reverend Vernon King of Charlotte, North Carolina; and Reverend Derek B. King of Indianapolis, Indiana. King lived most of her life as a mother and First Lady. She brought musical concerts, women's enrichment programs, and tools for living to her husband's congregations. Together, she and her husband supported Martin Luther King, Jr., when, in 1955, Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to move to the back of the bus in Montgomery, Alabama; at the creation of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1957; when students in Greensboro, North Carolina, launch the sit-in movement in 1960; through the Birmingham campaign of 1963; during 1963's "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom"; and throughout 1965's campaign to vote in Selma. Toward the end of the campaign in Birmingham, on May 11, 1963, a bomb destroyed the Gaston Motel, where Martin Luther King, Jr. was staying, and another damaged the home of Naomi and A.D. King.

On April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. This tragedy was soon followed by the death of King's husband, A.D., in 1969; on July 21, King and her children were vacationing in Nassau when A.D. drowned in their home swimming pool. On July 30, 1974, King's mother-in-law, Alberta Christine Williams King, was murdered by deranged gunman Marcus Chenault as she played the Lord's Prayer at Ebenezer Church. In 1976, King's younger daughter, Darlene died while jogging from an apparent heart attack, and ten years later, her son Al died in the same manner. In 1984, King's father-in-law, Martin Luther King, Sr., passed away from a heart attack, and in 2006, she lost her sister-in-law, Coretta Scott King, to advanced stage ovarian cancer. Despite these losses, King has kept her husband's memory alive through her establishment of the A.D. King Foundation in 2008. She received the SCLC Rosa Parks Freedom Award in January 2008.

Naomi King was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 14, 2010.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Naomi King was conducted by Denise Gines

on July 14, 2010, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Civil rights activist Naomi King (1931 -) was the wife of the late A.D. Williams King, brother to Martin Luther King, Jr. She and her husband supported the Civil Rights Movement. King received the SCLC Rosa Parks Freedom Award in January 2008.

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:

King, Naomi

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
King, Naomi--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change; NAACP;
Southern Christian Leadership Conference; Spelman College

Occupations:

Civil Rights Activist

HistoryMakers® Category:

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 Naomi King, July 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).

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

Video Oral History Interview with Naomi King, Section
A2010_071_001_001, TRT: 0:28:54 2010/07/14

Naomi King was born on November 17, 1931 in Dothan, Alabama to Bessie Barber Bailey. She knew little about her father or grandparents, aside from the fact that her paternal grandfather was Native American. King's mother was employed as a cotton picker in Dothan; and, when King was an infant, often carried her to work in the fields. When King was four years old, she moved with her mother to Atlanta, Georgia. They briefly lived with King's maternal uncle, Rufus Barber, before joining the household of Vera Greer, a family friend who lived in a two story home in the middle class, African American neighborhood of Mechanicsville. King enrolled at Walker Street Elementary School, and became a talented pianist, although she stopped playing after her mother was unable to move a piano into their second floor apartment. King

went on to attend the Davis Street School and Booker T. Washington High School, where she sang in the choir.

Video Oral History Interview with Naomi King, Section
A2010_071_001_002, TRT: 0:29:01 2010/07/14

Naomi King grew up in Atlanta, Georgia, where she was raised by her mother, Bessie Barber Bailey. The city was highly segregated; but, due to her mother's protection, King rarely experienced hostility from the white community. She attended the Davis Street School and Booker T. Washington High School, and aspired to become an interior designer. During her senior year of high school in 1947, King and her mother joined the congregation of Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church, where the pastor was Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr. At the church, King met her future husband, Alfred Daniel Williams King, whose brother was Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. She also began her career as a fashion model at a church event, and went on to work for local clothing stores. Upon graduating, King matriculated at Spelman College with plans of becoming a French teacher; but, after one year, became pregnant and was forced to leave school. She married Alfred Daniel Williams King in 1950, prior to the birth of their first child.

Video Oral History Interview with Naomi King, Section
A2010_071_001_003, TRT: 0:28:18 2010/07/14

Naomi King married Alfred Daniel Williams King in 1950; and, shortly afterwards, gave birth to their first child, Alveda King Beal. The couple had four more children, three of whom died at young ages because of heart problems. In 1958, King's husband was called to preach, and was sent to the Mount Vernon First Baptist Church in Newnan, Georgia. King and her family later moved to Birmingham, Alabama, where her husband was assigned to the First Baptist Church of Ensley. In addition to his ministerial work, King's husband was a leader of the Civil Rights Movement, for which he often faced violent reprisals. In 1963, King's home in Birmingham was bombed by white supremacists while she and her family were inside. No one was harmed, although the front half of their house was destroyed. King also talks about her

close relationship with her husband's family, including his parents, Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr. and Alberta Williams King; and recalls witnessing her mother-in-law's assassination in 1974.

Video Oral History Interview with Naomi King, Section
A2010_071_001_004, TRT: 0:28:37 2010/07/14

Naomi King's husband, Alfred Daniel Williams King, and brother-in-law, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., were leaders of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s. During this time, King's husband encouraged her to avoid the violent demonstrations in order to care for their children. Like his brother, King's husband was a minister, and served congregations at the First Baptist Church of Ensley in Birmingham, Alabama; and at the Zion Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky. King had a close relationship with her sister-in-law, Coretta Scott King; and, because of the King family's activism, their phone calls were often monitored by the FBI. After his brother's assassination in 1968, King's husband was called to pastor the Ebenezer Baptist Church, and King returned with her family to Atlanta, Georgia. King also talks about her brother-in-law's commitment to nonviolence, her husband's role in the SCLC and her later work with SCLC/WOMEN.

Video Oral History Interview with Naomi King, Section
A2010_071_001_005, TRT: 0:29:10 2010/07/14

Naomi King's husband, Alfred Daniel Williams King, drowned in the family's pool in 1969. He had returned home early to attend church, while King and two of her children remained on vacation in Jamaica. Upon her return to the United States, King suspected that foul play was involved in her husband's death, as he was a strong swimmer. Following the deaths of her husband and his brother, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., King began working with her sister-in-law, Coretta Scott King, at The Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta, Georgia. King managed the gift shop, and travelled to speaking engagements with Coretta Scott King until her retirement in 1995. King also talks about the deaths of her sister-in-law and father-in-law, Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr. She reflects upon her life, her

concerns for the African American community and her advice to future generations. She also talks about her legacy and the legacy of her husband.

Video Oral History Interview with Naomi King, Section
A2010_071_001_006, TRT: 0:02:00 2010/07/14

Naomi King reflects upon the legacy of her husband, civil rights leader Alfred Daniel Williams King. She talks about the A.D. King Youth Empowerment Parade, as well as the documentary film 'Behold the Dream: Brother to the Dreamer,' which addressed her husband's relationship with his brother, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Video Oral History Interview with Naomi King, Section
A2010_071_001_007, TRT: 0:11:00 2010/07/14

Naomi King narrates her photographs.