

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reatha Clark King

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	King, Reatha Clark, 1938-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reatha Clark King,
Dates:	January 16, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012
Physical Description:	10 uncompressed MOV digital video files (4:51:04).
Abstract:	Chemist Reatha Clark King (1938 -) served as the president of Metropolitan State University, executive director of General Mills foundation and vice president of the General Mills Corporation. King was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 16, 2012, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_001
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Chemist and corporate executive Reatha Clark King was born on April 11, 1938 in Pavo, Georgia. She moved with her mother to Moultrie, Georgia after her parents separated when King was in elementary school. The daughter of poorly-educated sharecroppers, King joined her family in the cotton fields throughout her childhood. King began her education in a one-room schoolhouse where she excelled in school. In 1954, King graduated as valedictorian from the Moultrie High School for Negro Youth. She then obtained a scholarship to Clark College in Atlanta, Georgia, earning her B.S. degree in chemistry and mathematics in 1958. King received a Woodrow Wilson fellowship to continue her studies at the University of Chicago. She earned her M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in physical chemistry in 1960 and 1963, respectively. Her Ph.D. thesis was entitled "Contributions to the Thermochemistry of the Laves Phases."

After earning her Ph.D. degree, King was hired by the National Bureau of Standards, becoming the agency's first African American female chemist. As a research chemist, she won the Meritorious Publication Award for her paper on fluoride flame calorimetry. In 1968, King moved to New York City where she became an assistant professor at York College of the City University of New York in Jamaica, Queens. There, King quickly advanced her career, becoming associate dean for the Division of Natural Science and Mathematics in 1970, and associate dean for academic affairs in 1974. In 1977, King left York College to become the second president of Metropolitan State University in Minneapolis and St Paul, Minnesota. Prior to her departure from New York, King received her M.B.A. degree from Columbia University. After eleven years at Metropolitan State University, King was hired at General Mills in Minneapolis, Minnesota as executive director of the General Mills Foundation and vice president of the General Mills Corporation. She retired in 2002, but remained with General Mills for one additional year as chair of the board of directors. Since 1979, King has served on numerous corporate and nonprofit boards, including the Exxon Mobil Company, H.B. Fuller Company, Wells Fargo & Company, Minnesota Mutual Insurance Company, University of Chicago, American Council on Education and the Council on Foundations. In 2011, she began her service with Allina Health Systems as a corporate director. Currently, King also serves on the board of

the National Association of Corporate Directors and is Emeritus Trustee of the University of Chicago.

She has received many awards for her achievements including National Association of Corporate Directors (NACD) Director of the Year, Defender of Democracy Award from the Washington, DC. Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation, Inc. and Exceptional Black Scientist Award from the CIBA-GEIGY Corporation and 14 honorary doctorate degrees. She is married to N. Judge King and they have two children, N. Judge King, III and Scott King.

Reatha Clark King was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on 01/16/2012.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reatha Clark King was conducted by Larry Crowe on January 16, 2012, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and was recorded on 10 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Chemist Reatha Clark King (1938 -) served as the president of Metropolitan State University, executive director of General Mills foundation and vice president of the General Mills Corporation.

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, Reatha Clark, 1938-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
King, Reatha Clark, 1938- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Chemist

HistoryMakers® Category:

ScienceMakers

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 Reatha Clark King, January 16, 2012. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 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 Reatha Clark King, Section A2012_001_001_001, TRT: 1:30:17
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Reatha Clark King talks about her mother and her side of the family. Her mother, Ola Mae Watts Clark, was born in Pavo, Georgia in December of 1917 of a sharecropping family. Ola Mae was illiterate and this presented challenges when it came to her earning income. Despite her lack of education, Ola Mae's daughters' education was very important to her.

African American mothers--Georgia

Children of sharecroppers--Georgia.

African Americans--Education.

Video Oral History Interview with Reatha Clark King, Section A2012_001_001_002, TRT: 2:33:16
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Reatha Clark King talks about her father and his side of the family. Her father, Willie B. Clark, was born between 1917 and 1918 in North Georgia. His family moved to Pavo, Georgia after the death of his mother. Clark met King's mother, Ola Mae, at church and after he courted her, they married. King has two sisters, Mamie Lee, the oldest, and Dorothy Ola, the youngest. King is closest to her older sister, Mamie, who attended Dillard University in New Orleans, Louisiana. King attended Clark College in Atlanta, Georgia.

African American fathers--Georgia.

African Americans--Husband and wife--Georgia.

African American families--Sisters.

Clark College--Alumni and alumnae.

Video Oral History Interview with Reatha Clark King, Section A2012_001_001_003, TRT: 3:28:59
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Reatha Clark King attended Mount Zion Baptist Church for elementary school. During her time there, her mother and father, Ola Mae Watts Clark and Willie B. Clark, separated due to her father's alcoholism and physical abuse. After their separation, Ola Mae sent King and her sisters away to live with their grandmother until she could earn enough money to support them on her own. King talks about her experience at Moultrie High School for Negro Youth. After graduating in 1954, she earned a scholarship to attend Clark College in Atlanta, Georgia.

Church schools--Georgia.

Fathers--Alcohol use.

Alcoholics--Family violence.

African American single mothers.

African American students--Georgia.

Video Oral History Interview with Reatha Clark King, Section A2012_001_001_004, TRT: 4:27:56
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Reatha Clark King attended Moultrie High School for Negro Youth in Moultrie, Georgia. After graduating as the class valedictorian in 1954, she enrolled at Clark College. She was initially a home economics major because she wanted to become a high school teacher at her hometown's high school. However, by her second semester at Clark, she realized that she enjoyed chemistry and had received some encouragement from her chemistry professor to pursue a career as a research chemist. After graduating from Clark College in 1958, she attended the University of Chicago in Chicago, Illinois and earned her Masters of Science

and Ph.D. in Chemistry.
Clark College--Students.
Chemistry--Vocational guidance.
Chemistry--Study and teaching (Higher).

Video Oral History Interview with Reatha Clark King, Section A2012_001_001_005, TRT: 5:29:57
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Reatha Clark King began graduate school at the University of Chicago in 1958, immediately after her graduation from Clark College. She earned a master's degree and Ph.D. in chemistry in 1960 and 1963, respectively. King talks about how her experience at the University of Chicago was a positive one. She enjoyed the lab at the University of Chicago and published several papers leading up to her dissertation, which was on heater formation and the thermochemistry of laves phases. Her research has received recognition from the National Bureau of Standards and NASA.

University of Chicago--African American graduate students.
Thermochemistry--Research.
United States. National Bureau of Standards.
United States. National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Video Oral History Interview with Reatha Clark King, Section A2012_001_001_006, TRT: 6:29:51
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Reatha Clark King met her husband, Judge King, in 1959 at a basketball game in Chicago, Illinois. Their marriage, in December of 1961, was officiated by one of her mentors, Dr. Benjamin Mays. They have two children, Judge and Scott Clark. After earning her Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1963, she continued to publish some of her work and was hired to work at the National Bureau of Standards as a research chemist. After about five years of doing research at the National Bureau of Standards, King transitioned into teaching at York College in the City University of New York. She navigated the ranks of administration at CUNY and decided to pursue an M.B.A. degree at Columbia University.

African Americans--Husband and wife--Illinois.
Mays, Benjamin E. (Benjamin Elijah), 1894-1984
United States. National Bureau of Standards--Employees.
City University of New York--Faculty.
Universities and colleges--Administration--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Reatha Clark King, Section A2012_001_001_007, TRT: 7:30:17
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Reatha Clark King became the President of Metropolitan State University after earning her M.B.A. degree from Columbia University. She discusses some of her proudest accomplishments during her eleven years as president at Metropolitan State University. In 1988, King was appointed as vice president of General Mills Inc. and president of the General Mills Foundation. She discusses her transition from research and academia to philanthropy and civic activities.

Metropolitan State University--Presidents.
General Mills Foundation--Presidents.
Career changes--United States.
Philanthropy--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Reatha Clark King, Section A2012_001_001_008, TRT: 8:28:34
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Reatha Clark King was selected as one of Minnesota's most influential citizens in 1999. She retired from the General Mills Foundation in 2002, at the age of sixty-five. In 2004, she served as a Louis W. Hill Jr. Fellow in Philanthropy at the Herbert Humphrey Center at the University of Minnesota. There, she did a research project on the relationship between government and public policy with philanthropic foundations. Her paper was entitled 'Philanthropy and Public Policy: Working Together to make a Bigger Difference.' She discusses her hopes and concerns for the African American community and summarizes her legacy.

Awards--Minnesota.

General Mills Foundation--Presidents--Retirement.

African Americans--Scholarships, fellowships, etc.

Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs

Philanthropy--Research.

Video Oral History Interview with Reatha Clark King, Section A2012_001_001_009, TRT: 9:27:40 ?

Reatha Clark King has been married to her husband, Judge King, for fifty years. They have two adult sons, a daughter-in-law, and three grandchildren. King and her husband enjoy traveling and make concerted efforts to give back to their community. She also enjoys learning and emphasizes the importance of continued education to younger people.

African American families.

African Americans--Marriage.

Continuing education.

Video Oral History Interview with Reatha Clark King, Section A2012_001_001_010, TRT: 10:24:17 ?

Reatha Clark King shares her family photos.

Photographs.