

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Barbara Ransby

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Ransby, Barbara
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Ransby,
Dates:	January 19, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:55:17).
Abstract:	History professor and african american studies professor Barbara Ransby (1957 -) joined the faculty of the University of Illinois at Chicago in 1996 and was the author of the book, 'Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement'. Ransby was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 19, 2012, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_016
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

African American studies and history professor Barbara Ransby was born on May 12, 1957 in Detroit, Michigan. As an infant, Ransby was adopted by Charlie and Ethel Ransby. She completed her B.A. degree in history from Columbia University in 1984. During her time at Columbia, Ransby worked for the Institute of African Affairs and the Department of History as a research assistant. Ransby received her M.S. degree in history from University of Michigan, Ann Arbor in 1987. While at the University of Michigan, she taught African American studies. Ransby founded the Ella Baker-Nelson Mandela Center for Anti-Racist Education in 1988 and the African American Women in Defense of Ourselves Organization in 1991. She served as an instructor of history at DePaul University from 1992 to 1995; and an assistant professor and director of the Center for African American Research from 1995 to 1996. Ransby received her Ph.D. in history from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor in 1996.

Following the completion of her education, she joined the faculty of the University of Illinois, Chicago (UIC) as an assistant professor in the departments of history and African American studies. In 1998, Ransby co-founded the Black Radical Congress and in 2002, she was promoted to associate professor at UIC. In 2003, Ransby authored the award-winning biography of civil rights activist Ella Baker, entitled *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement*. In 2004, she received the Coordinating Council for Women in History's Prelinger Award. Since 2008, Ransby has served as professor and director of UIC's Gender and Women Studies Department and in 2011, she was appointed interim vice provost for planning and programs at UIC. She has written many articles and contributed to several books on civil rights, black feminism and African American history.

Ransby has served on the board of directors for many organizations including the CrossRoads Fund, *Chicago Reporter* Magazine, Anti-Racism Institute and the Chicago Coalition in Solidarity with Southern Africa. She has been a member of the Association of Black Women Historians, the Coordinating Committee for Women in Historical Profession and the Organization of American Historians. Ransby serves on the editorial board of *The Race and Class Journal* and on the editorial advisory board of *The Black Commentator*, an online publication. She

is married to Peter Sporn; the couple have two children Asha and Jason.

Barbara Ransby was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 19, 2012.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Barbara Ransby was conducted by Larry Crowe on January 19, 2012, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. History professor and african american studies professor Barbara Ransby (1957 -) joined the faculty of the University of Illinois at Chicago in 1996 and was the author of the book, 'Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement'.

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:

Ransby, Barbara

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Ransby, Barbara--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

History Professor

African American Studies Professor

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

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Ransby, January 19, 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 Barbara Ransby, Section A2012_016_001_001, TRT: 1:29:19 ?

Barbara Ransby was born on May 12, 1957 in Detroit, Michigan, and was adopted as an infant by Ethel Thomas Ransby and Charlie Ransby. Ransby's maternal adoptive grandmother and her second husband, Rosia Pittman and Henry Pittman, were sharecroppers in Greenwood, Mississippi. There, Ransby's adoptive mother was sterilized by a doctor without her consent, and her first husband passed away. At that time, Ransby's adoptive mother moved with her parents to Detroit. Ransby's adoptive father's parents, Queenie Fallens and Lee Ransby, worked as farmers and domestics in Newnan, Georgia. After his father died, Ransby's paternal grandmother married John Fallens, who was a barber. As a young man, Ransby's adoptive father moved to Detroit to work for U.S. Industrial Glove Company. After her adoption, Ransby was raised by her adoptive parents and maternal grandparents on the west side of Detroit. She remembers the riots of 1967, which began while she was celebrating a friend's birthday.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Ransby, Section A2012_016_001_002, TRT: 2:31:06 ?

Barbara Ransby was ten years old during the uprisings of 1967 in her hometown of Detroit, Michigan. She reflects upon the resulting destruction, and remembers a local white-owned grocery store that was spared because the owner did not exploit the community. Ransby began her education at Detroit's Columbian Elementary School, and went on to attend St. Leo High School, where she excelled in history. She later transferred to Rosary High School, an all-girls school that was predominantly white. There, Ransby became interested in the Black Power movement. At the time, Detroit was home to a chapter of the Black Panther Party, Vaughn's bookstore and Albert Cleage's Shrine of the Black Madonna. During this time, Ransby aspired to become a journalist. She wrote a teen column for the Michigan Chronicle, a local black newspaper, in which she covered social events and accomplishments in the African American community, including graduations and volunteer work.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Ransby, Section A2012_016_001_003, TRT: 3:32:47 ?

Barbara Ransby attended the predominantly white Rosary High School in Detroit, Michigan. Because the school was scheduled to close during her senior year, Ransby completed an accelerated summer program and graduated in 1974. She decided to postpone her undergraduate education, and joined the Team for Justice, Inc., where she served as an employment counselor for people who were recently released from prison. Ransby then became a social worker for Detroit's Project Headline and the North End Concerned Citizens Community Council. She went on to attend Wayne State University, where she was mentored by Professor Paul Sporn. Ransby began dating his son, Peter H. Sporn; and, in 1980, the couple moved to New York City. There, Ransby enrolled at the Columbia University School of General Studies, where she studied history under Eric Foner and Hollis Lynch. She also served as a chairperson of the Coalition for a Free South Africa, which advocated for the school's divestment from apartheid South Africa.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Ransby, Section A2012_016_001_004, TRT: 4:30:41 ?

Barbara Ransby attended Columbia University in New York City, where she joined the Coalition for a Free South Africa. She also served as a student representative on the University Senate, where she successfully advocated for the school's divestment from apartheid South Africa. During this time, Ransby attended several anti-apartheid conferences in Chicago, Illinois and Ann Arbor, Michigan. After graduating in 1984, Ransby matriculated to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where she earned a Ph.D. degree in history. She wrote her dissertation on civil rights leader Ella Baker under the advisement of black

historians Barbara J. Fields and Thomas C. Holt. Years later, Ransby published an expanded version of her dissertation called 'Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement.' She also became a member of the Association of Black Women Historians, which developed a network of African American women in the field of history and promoted research on African American topics.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Ransby, Section A2012_016_001_005, TRT: 5:29:20 ?

Barbara Ransby earned a Ph.D. degree in history at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. As part of her coursework, Ransby completed an internship at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit, Michigan. On the campus, she became a member of the Free South Africa Coordinating Committee, the United Coalition Against Racism and the Black Action Movement III, which was developed by the Ella Baker Nelson Mandela Center for Anti-Racist Education. After graduating in 1991, Ransby moved to Chicago, Illinois to work for the Progressive Media Project. She also became involved with African American Women in Defense of Ourselves, which was organized to support sexual harassment victim Anita Hill. In 1992, Ransby accepted a teaching position at Chicago's DePaul University, where she also briefly served as director of the Center for African American Research. In 2003, she published her first book, 'Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement.'

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Ransby, Section A2012_016_001_006, TRT: 6:22:04 ?

Barbara Ransby was active in anti-apartheid movement throughout her time as an undergraduate and graduate student. Upon the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990, she and her colleagues held a celebration on the Diag at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. After completing her Ph.D. degree in 1996, Ransby became an assistant professor of history and the interim vice provost for planning and programs at the University of Illinois at Chicago. While there, she helped to found the Black Radical Congress in 1998, alongside Manning Marable and William Gerald Fletcher, Jr. In addition to her political activities, Ransby published numerous articles, edited volumes and monographs, including 'Eslanda,' which examined the life of Eslanda Robeson. Ransby reflects upon her life and legacy, and describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community. She concludes the interview by describing how she would like to be remembered.