

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Eva M. Clayton

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Clayton, Eva M.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Eva M. Clayton,
Dates:	February 22, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:43:52).
Abstract:	U.S. congresswoman The Honorable Eva M. Clayton (1934 -) was the first black woman elected to U.S. Congress from North Carolina, serving with distinction for ten years as an advocate for programs for disadvantaged African Americans and rural and agricultural interests in her district. Clayton was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 22, 2012, in Raleigh, North Carolina. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_059
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

U.S. congresswoman Eva M. Clayton was born in Savannah, Georgia on September 16, 1934. In 1955, Clayton received her B.S. degree in biology from Johnson C. Smith University. She then obtained her M.S. degree in biology and general science from North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina in 1962. With the encouragement of civil rights activist and attorney Vernon Jordan, Clayton sought election to Congress in a north-central North Carolina district. Despite a losing bid, Clayton's initial run generated black voter registration. In the early 1970s, she worked for several public and private ventures, including the North Carolina Health Manpower Development Program at the University of North Carolina. In 1974, she cofounded and served as the executive director of Soul City Foundation, a housing organization that renovated dilapidated buildings for use as homeless shelters and daycare centers. Clayton worked on the successful gubernatorial campaign of Jim Hunt, who later appointed Clayton the assistant secretary of the North Carolina department of natural resources and community development. Clayton served in that capacity from 1977 until 1981. In 1982 she won election to the Warren County Board of Commissioners, which she chaired until 1990.

When Representative Walter Jones, Sr. announced his retirement in 1992, Clayton entered the Democratic primary to fill his seat. She eventually won the special election to fill the last two months of Jones's unexpired term in the 102nd Congress (1991–1993) and defeated Republican Ted Tyler for a full term in the 103rd Congress (1993–1995). Clayton became the first black woman elected to U.S. Congress in North Carolina. In her subsequent four bids for re-election, she won comfortably, with 60 percent or more of the vote. Clayton served with distinction for ten years as the U.S. Representative of North Carolina's 1st Congressional District. While in Congress, she served on Agriculture and Budget Committees and as ranking member of the Agriculture Department's Operations Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry Subcommittees. Clayton is the past chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. In 2003, her name was put forth as a possible Democratic vice-presidential candidate. Clayton completed a three year-assignment with the Food Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome,

Italy in 2006 as Assistant Director-General and Special Adviser to the Director-General. In this post, Clayton helped to establish national alliances and partnerships in over 24 countries to fight hunger and poverty including the United States of America. She currently serves as the chairperson of Preserve Community Pharmacy Access NOW (PCPAN), a project of the Pharmacy Choice and Access Now (PCAN) coalition, which fights on behalf of patients to preserve access to quality and affordable health care and pharmacy services.

Clayton is the mother of four adult children, Joanne, Theaoseus, Jr., Martin and Reuben. She is married to Attorney Theaoseus T. Clayton, Sr. and they are proud grandparents of six grandchildren.

Eva M. Clayton was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 22, 2012.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Eva M. Clayton was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 22, 2012, in Raleigh, North Carolina, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. U.S. congresswoman The Honorable Eva M. Clayton (1934 -) was the first black woman elected to U.S. Congress from North Carolina, serving with distinction for ten years as an advocate for programs for disadvantaged African Americans and rural and agricultural interests in her district.

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:

Clayton, Eva M.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Clayton, Eva M.--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States. Congress. House

Occupations:

U.S. Congresswoman

HistoryMakers® Category:

PoliticalMakers

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 The Honorable Eva M. Clayton, February 22, 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 The Honorable Eva M. Clayton, Section A2012_059_001_001, TRT: 1:29:02 ?

The Honorable Eva M. Clayton was born on September 16, 1934 in Savannah, Georgia to Josephine Martin McPherson and Thomas McPherson, Sr. Her maternal great-grandfather was a minister in Blackshear, Georgia. His daughter, Eva Martin, gave birth to Clayton's mother around 1900. Shortly thereafter, the family relocated to Brunswick, Georgia, where Clayton's mother studied teaching at the Selden Normal and Industrial Institute. Clayton's father was born around 1890 near the southern coast of South Carolina, where his father was a minister and farmer. As a young man, Clayton's father moved to Savannah, and secured a position at the Guaranty Life Insurance Company. There, he met Clayton's mother, who was working as a secretary. After marrying, they settled in Savannah until Clayton's birth, when they relocated to Augusta, Georgia. There, Clayton attended the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Steed Street School, where her mother was president of the Parent Teacher Association.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Eva M. Clayton, Section A2012_059_001_002, TRT: 2:29:31 ?

The Honorable Eva M. Clayton attended high school at the all-black Haines Normal and Industrial Institute in Augusta, Georgia. During her time there, the school became a public institution, and was renamed Lucy Craft Laney High School in honor of its founder. Clayton was interested in science, and aspired to become a missionary doctor like Albert Schweitzer. She graduated from high school in 1951, and received a scholarship to study biology at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina. There, she was influenced by Professor Annys C. Buck and bookstore clerk L.S. Malone, and befriended Charles L. Curry, Evelyn Blackwell and Essie Green. Clayton joined the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, sang in the school choir and played clarinet in the band. She also met her husband, Theaoseus T. Clayton, Sr. During the summer, Clayton worked on a mental health project with the American Friends Service Committee, where she experienced integration for the first time.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Eva M. Clayton, Section A2012_059_001_003, TRT: 3:29:39 ?

The Honorable Eva M. Clayton graduated in 1955 from Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina. She married Theaoseus T. Clayton, Sr., and secured a teaching position in Washington, Georgia. In 1957, Clayton moved to Durham, North Carolina, where her husband enrolled at the North Carolina College at Durham School of Law. She earned a master's degree in biology from the North Carolina College at Durham in 1962. The following year, Clayton moved with her husband to Warrenton, North Carolina, where she became involved in community organizing and economic development while caring for her four children. She formed the North Carolina Economic Development Corporation in 1968; and, encouraged by activist Vernon E. Jordan, Jr., ran for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. Clayton worked as a minority recruiter for the University of North Carolina from 1971 to 1973, and then became involved with the Soul City Foundation in 1974.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Eva M. Clayton, Section A2012_059_001_004,

TRT: 4:28:52 ?

The Honorable Eva M. Clayton helped develop the planned community of Soul City, North Carolina. The project was funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the development stopped after the Watergate scandal of 1974. Clayton left Soul City to join Jim Hunt's gubernatorial campaign team in 1976; and, the following year, was appointed as the assistant secretary of the North Carolina Department of Natural Resources and Community Development. In 1981, Clayton left the state government, and mounted a successful campaign for the commissionership of Warren County, North Carolina. She served as the commissioner of Warren County from 1982 to 1990, and worked to support the county's rural communities. Following the death of U.S. Representative from North Carolina Walter B. Jones, Sr. in 1992, Clayton ran for his congressional seat. She won a runoff election against Walter B. Jones, Jr., and was elected president of the freshman legislators in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Eva M. Clayton, Section A2012_059_001_005, TRT: 5:28:56 ?

The Honorable Eva M. Clayton was inaugurated to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1992. She served as president of her freshman congressional class, and joined the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues. A Democrat, she maintained her seat during the Republican Revolution of 1994, and worked to protect programs like the Summer Youth Employment Program from budget cuts. In 1995, Clayton was appointed to the Democratic Advisory Committee to help formulate the party's electoral strategy. She served on the U.S. House of Representatives Agricultural Committee during *Pigford v. Glickman*, a class action lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Agriculture; and helped implement compensation payments to black farmers under the settlement's consent decree. In 2001, Clayton decided not to seek reelection. From 2003 to 2006, she served as an assistant director general of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, where she led the International Alliance Against Hunger.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Eva M. Clayton, Section A2012_059_001_006, TRT: 6:17:52 ?

The Honorable Eva M. Clayton served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1992 to 2002. During this time, she worked on a campaign to support black home ownership in collaboration with U.S. Representative Melvin Luther Watt and the Congressional Black Caucus. In 2008, Clayton returned to the U.S. House of Representatives to speak to the Financial Services Committee about global hunger on behalf of the United Nations (UN). At the time of the interview, she continued to campaign against hunger through public activism and writing. In 2011, the Eva M. Clayton Fellows Program Act was proposed to provide support for graduate students from historically black universities to work in developing countries and at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome, Italy. Clayton describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community, and concludes the interview by reflecting upon her life, legacy and how she would like to be remembered.