

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Frances Frazier

---

## 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>	Frazier, Frances Curtis, 1948-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Frances Frazier,
<b>Dates:</b>	April 4, 2012 and May 10, 2013
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2012 and 2013
<b>Physical Description:</b>	13 uncompressed MOV digital video files (6:09:42).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Social activist and education consultant Frances Frazier (1948 - ) is an education and civic leader in the State of Ohio, having established programs, conducted retreats and given presentations on issues of sisterhood, spiritual development and self-empowerment across the country. She is the principal investigator for the ground-breaking research on trauma and resiliency in African American girls in Ohio, "Rise Sister Rise." Frazier was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 4, 2012 and May 10, 2013, in Columbus, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2012_078
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Education consultant and life coach Frances Curtis Frazier was born on May 19, 1948 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Patsy Thompson Curtis, a homemaker and William Henry Curtis, a building manager. In 1966, she graduated from Little Flower Catholic High School. After high school, Fran applied to become a Vista Volunteer, the national forerunner of the current Vista Program. She was in one of

the first groups of this national initiative for young people to become part of “The Great America”. She studied at John Hopkins University and worked with maternal deprivation babies. Later she was sent to Portsmouth, Virginia in a small community to help residents who were being harassed by the Klu Klux Klan. Fran taught peanut farmers how to read and write. It was after her Vista experience that with the help of a local school principal she entered Norfolk State University and in 1972 received her B.S. degree in special education. Fran received a Master/Doctoral fellowship to attend The Ohio State University and graduated with her M.A. degree in learning disabilities and behavioral disorders in 1973.

In 1986, Frazier was a special education teacher for Columbus City Schools, working primarily with seventh and eighth graders. After working as a special needs coordinator for the National Assault Prevention Center of Columbus, Ohio from 1985 to 1987, Frazier was hired to the executive staff for the Director of the Ohio Department of Human Services. While at the Department of Human Services, Frazier worked for the Office of Minority Family Preservation and Prevention Services and served as an administrator for cultural initiatives. She has also served as an education and school climate consultant for universities, colleges, professional associations, school districts, and social service agencies across the country. Since 1979, Frazier has established programs, conducted retreats and given presentations on issues of sisterhood, spiritual development and self-empowerment.

In her current role, Frazier is the principal investigator of “Rise Sister Rise,” a research study on trauma and resiliency in African American girls that was developed in partnership with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and women’s organizations across the state. Additionally, Frazier serves as a senior associate for *Everyday Democracy*, an organization that promotes public dialogue and civic engagement in communities and workplaces.

Frazier has received numerous awards and commendations for her work including the Black Family Award from the Columbus Urban League for co-creating “Black Family Week” in the state of Ohio; the “Woman of the Year” Award from the Eldon W. Ward YMCA; the “Women Making A Difference Award for Community Leadership” from the Ohio Department of Health; from Triedstone Missionary Baptist Church she received the “Remarkable Women’s Award” for her work in the Columbus community. She has also garnered the YWCA “Woman of Achievement Award” in Racial Justice and recognition from the State of Ohio for engaging state employees to participate in workplace dialogues on racism. Frazier has received the “Golden Rulers Award” from the Columbus, Ohio School Board. She is also a recipient of the “Living Faith” Award from the Columbus Metropolitan Area Church Council.

Frances Curtis Frazier was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on April 6, 2012.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Frances Frazier was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 4, 2012 and May 10, 2013, in Columbus, Ohio, and was recorded on 13 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Social activist and education consultant Frances Frazier (1948 - ) is an education and civic leader in the State of Ohio, having established programs, conducted retreats and given presentations on issues of sisterhood, spiritual development and self-empowerment across the country. She is the principal investigator for the ground-breaking research on trauma and resiliency in African American girls in Ohio, "Rise Sister Rise."

---

## 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:**

Frazier, Frances Curtis, 1948-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

**Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews

Frazier, Frances Curtis, 1948---Interviews

---

**Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

Ohio. Dept. of Human Services

---

**Occupations:**

Social Activist

---

Education Consultant

---

**HistoryMakers® Category:**

CivicMakers|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 Frances Frazier, April 4, 2012 and May 10, 2013. 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 Frances Frazier, Section  
A2012\_078\_001\_001, TRT: 1:28:28 2012/04/04

Frances Frazier was born on May 19, 1948 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Frazier's family history holds that her matrilineal great-grandparents met in upstate New York; her great-grandmother was of the Ojibwe tribe and her great-grandfather was a fur trader. Frazier's maternal

grandmother, Mattie Mae Sylvia Jennings, attended convent schools and New York's Juilliard School. She was disinherited after marrying a poor Portuguese fisherman. Frazier's parents, Patsy Leticia Thompson Curtis and William Henry Curtis, were both born in Philadelphia. Frazier's mother attended Germantown High School and aspired to become a singer before marrying Frazier's father at age eighteen. Frazier's father worked for Philadelphia's Budd Company as a manager and union steward. He built airplane engines during WWII, and her mother sang occasionally for United Service Organizations events. Frazier recalls advice her mother shared with her as a teenager.

Video Oral History Interview with Frances Frazier, Section  
A2012\_078\_001\_002, TRT: 2:29:09 2012/04/04

Frances Frazier's parents worked as a maid and butler in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania during the early years of their marriage. Frazier's father later worked for the Budd Company and the Philadelphia Housing Authority; he was an active member of the local NAACP. Frazier grew up on North Philadelphia's West Boston Street, an interracial neighborhood, with her parents and several siblings. The Ward sisters, members of the gospel music group The Famous Ward Singers, lived on an adjacent street. Frazier's family converted to Catholicism when the children began attending Catholic schools. Frazier started school at St. Elizabeth's Parochial School. When the family moved to Philadelphia's Nicetown neighborhood, she attended St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School and Little Flower Catholic High School for Girls. Frazier describes her earliest childhood memories and the sights, sounds and smells of her neighborhood. She talks about her parents' personalities, who she takes after, and her childhood personality.

Video Oral History Interview with Frances Frazier, Section  
A2012\_078\_001\_003, TRT: 3:28:34 2012/04/04

Frances Frazier attended St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania's Nicetown neighborhood for seventh and eighth grade. In the 1950s, Nicetown was a white, predominately Eastern European neighborhood. Frazier's mother later moved the family

into a new federal housing project in North Philadelphia after Frazier's father became increasingly abusive at home. During Frazier's teenage years, her father relapsed into alcoholism. The family did not talk about their home life or seek outside counsel. Frazier explains how observing domestic violence as an adolescent affected her personality. Frazier went on to attend Philadelphia's Little Flower Catholic High School for Girls, where she began writing short stories and plays. She enjoyed listening to Philadelphia radio personalities Jerry Blavat and Georgie Woods as a teenager. Frazier briefly considered becoming a nun. After watching the 1963 March on Washington on television, she decided to delay college and instead join the VISTA program.

Video Oral History Interview with Frances Frazier, Section  
A2012\_078\_001\_004, TRT: 4:30:02 2012/04/04

Frances Frazier joined the VISTA program immediately after graduating from Philadelphia's Little Flower Catholic High School for Girls in 1963. She trained in the pediatrics unit at The Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland and then transferred to the Mount Hermon community of Portsmouth, Virginia. There, Frazier taught literacy to peanut farmers and opened a daycare center. Members of the Ku Klux Klan planned to bomb her house and kill her, but she escaped to Norfolk, Virginia with a fellow VISTA volunteer. After serving for eighteen months, Frazier enrolled at Norfolk State College in Norfolk, Virginia through the Thirteen-College Curriculum Program. Frazier's mother viewed her decisions to wear her hair natural and to smoke as rebellious behavior. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, conservative social mores continued to inform student behavior at Norfolk State. Frazier talks about her college mentors, including Dr. Ruth Winstead Diggs, chair of special education at Norfolk State.

Video Oral History Interview with Frances Frazier, Section  
A2012\_078\_001\_005, TRT: 5:30:02 2012/04/04

Frances Frazier studied special education at Norfolk State College in Norfolk, Virginia. In addition to reading social critics such as Frantz Fanon and Paulo Freire, she traveled around the country. Frazier volunteered as a social worker

in Norfolk's Ghent neighborhood. She recalls the 1968 assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and names several black college basketball players she knew as an undergraduate. Frazier graduated from Norfolk State with her B.S. degree in special education in 1972. She attended a black visitation day, a program organized by Dr. Frank Hale to increase diversity, at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, and earned a master/doctoral fellowship to continue her special education studies. Frazier talks about the feelings of fear and isolation accompanying the transition from Norfolk State to Ohio State. Frazier studied Skinnerian theory. She describes teaching language arts through performance to children with learning and behavioral disorders.

Video Oral History Interview with Frances Frazier, Section  
A2012\_078\_001\_006, TRT: 6:31:01 2012/04/04

Frances Frazier graduated from The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio with her M.A. degree in learning disabilities and behavioral disorders in 1973. She decided not to complete her doctoral studies despite having a five year fellowship. She accepted her first teaching position at Buckeye Boys Ranch where she worked with boys with behavioral disorders. Frazier's husband was killed in a car accident less than two years after their marriage. She describes a spiritual experience, which manifested both physically and psychologically, she had shortly after his death. Frazier felt called to do women's work.

HistoryMaker Haki Madhubuti's article "The Quality of Sharing," published as part of 'Enemies: The Clash of Races,' inspired Frazier to found A Quality of Sharing. A philosophy of black sisterhood and community health informed the group's work. Frazier also read women's literature in preparation for leading the group. A Quality of Sharing began meeting in Columbus community centers in 1979.

Video Oral History Interview with Frances Frazier, Section  
A2012\_078\_002\_007, TRT: 7:28:30 2013/05/10

Frances Frazier advocated deinstitutionalization in her work with the Ohio Association for Retarded Citizens. In 1979, she founded her women's group, A Quality of Sharing. An Afro-centric philosophy of sisterhood and

community health informed the group's work. Frazier encountered resistance from some leaders in Columbus, Ohio's African American community. Amos Lynch, editor in chief of the Call and Post, supported Frazier's initiatives from the organization's inception. Frazier created Black Youth Week in response to the Atlanta Child Murders of 1979 - 1981. In 1983, she built upon the program's success by starting Black Family Week. Frazier hosted a weekly Sunday morning radio show, Focus on the Family, on Columbus' WVKO for nearly ten years. She worked for the Child Assault Prevention Project, primarily developing curriculum for special needs children, from 1981 - 1985. She talks about Reverend Dr. Charles Booth, pastor of Mount Olivet Baptist Church in Columbus.

Video Oral History Interview with Frances Frazier, Section  
A2012\_078\_002\_008, TRT: 8:30:22 2013/05/10

Frances Frazier attended the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi, Kenya in 1985 as a representative from the City of Columbus, Ohio. She recalls hearing Wangari Maathai speak and the cross-cultural connections she made with women from Europe, Africa, and Asia. In 1987, she traveled to Moscow for the World Congress of Women conference. Frazier worked on prevention and cultural initiatives for the Ohio Department of Human Services in the late 1980s and early 1990s. She founded a state diversity committee while at the agency. Frazier was also involved in the early planning stages for Columbus' Elizabeth Blackwell Center, a freestanding clinic devoted to women's health issues. She talks about African American women leaders from the 19th century as well as 20th century feminists Grace Williams and HistoryMaker Dorothy Height. Alice Walker's theory of womanism, coined in 'In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens,' (1983) shaped Frazier's sense of self and the activities of her women's group, A Quality of Sharing.

Video Oral History Interview with Frances Frazier, Section  
A2012\_078\_002\_009, TRT: 9:28:47 2013/05/10

Frances Frazier worked with faith-based organizations to implement welfare reform initiatives while with the Ohio Department of Human Services from 1987 - 1998. In 1996, she organized Columbus, Ohio's first Women's Day

of Prayer. She also volunteered with the National Black Women's Health Project and received an M.A. degree in spiritual formation from the Shalem Institute in Washington, D.C. during this period. Reverend Dr. Leon Troy, pastor of Columbus' Second Baptist Church, became involved in Frazier's ministry in the late 1990s, serving as Frazier's institutional mainstay in Columbus' African American community. Frazier experienced a spiritual calling in the late 1990s. After working as a consultant to the Ohio Department of Human Services for two years, she left the agency to pursue women's work and spiritual ministry full-time. Frazier describes husbands' reactions to her women's empowerment activities and the incident that inspired her to organize a national women's conference.

Video Oral History Interview with Frances Frazier, Section  
A2012\_078\_002\_010, TRT: 10:28:06 2013/05/10

Frances Frazier attempted to organize the Conference for the Awakened Woman, a national conference addressing feminine power and men's reasons for fearing it, in the early 2000s. The Columbus Police Department planted undercover agents in planning meetings; theft and botched mailings further sabotaged the conference. Frazier wrote a curriculum for girls, *The Angel in You*, to address issues of victimization and relational aggression. She traveled both nationally and around the State of Ohio testing the curriculum. In 2004, she worked extensively with girls at Mifflin High School in Columbus after an incident of cultural insensitivity between an African American and a Somali teenager. Frazier talks about the relationship between Columbus' African American community and immigrant groups and the purpose of federal refugee funds. She explains how the Women's Movement stifled the political empowerment of black women.

Video Oral History Interview with Frances Frazier, Section  
A2012\_078\_002\_011, TRT: 11:29:31 2013/05/10

Frances Frazier developed the Rise Sister Rise research study out of her work with girls in high schools in greater Columbus, Ohio. She decided to research trauma and resiliency as related to black girls. The Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services provided funds to support the planning period. Frazier consulted with the

Black Women for Black Girls giving circle, a New York-based organization that had conducted a similar study. Frazier relied on statewide networks to administer 410 total surveys in Akron, Columbus, Dayton, and Lima, Ohio. The study included findings on the influence of best friends and parents; popular sources of advice; perceptions of partner value; and individual developmental assets. Frazier talks about her various professional roles, including consultant and community organizer.

Video Oral History Interview with Frances Frazier, Section  
A2012\_078\_002\_012, TRT: 12:28:19 2013/05/10

Frances Frazier incorporated the Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents into her research study, Rise Sister Rise. Frazier designed Rise Sister Rise as a random sample survey and limited the study participants to African American girls age eleven to eighteen. Upon completion of the surveys, she organized resiliency conferences and community dialogues. Frazier partnered with social service and civic organizations, including the YWCA and Ohio Family and Children First, in Dayton, Ohio, one of the four original participating cities. She hopes that the Rise Sister Rise research data will become the prototype for similar studies and programs; she plans to develop think tanks and foster more mentorship relationships. Frazier would like to host a state-wide conversation about the effect of absent fathers on the lives of black girls. She talks about what she would have done differently in life and reflects upon her legacy.

Video Oral History Interview with Frances Frazier, Section  
A2012\_078\_002\_013, TRT: 13:18:51 2013/05/10

Frances Frazier has mentored women throughout her career as a consultant and community organizer. She reflects upon her life and describes how she would like to be remembered. Frazier concludes by narrating her photographs.