

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Callie Crossley

Overview of the Collection

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| Repository: | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com |
| Creator: | Crossley, Callie |
| Title: | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Callie Crossley, |
| Dates: | April 23, 2013 |
| Bulk Dates: | 2013 |
| Physical Description: | 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:18:14). |
| Abstract: | Radio host Callie Crossley (1951 -) earned an Oscar® nomination, a National Emmy and the Alfred I. Dupont-Columbia Award (Gold Baton) for her role producing “Eyes on the Prize: America’s Civil Rights Years 1954-1965.” She is a former producer for ABC Television Networks’ “20/20” news magazine program and the primetime special “Black in White America.” Crossley was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 23, 2013, in Boston, Massachusetts. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| Identification: | A2013_118 |
| Language: | The interview and records are in English. |

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Radio talk show host Callie Crossley was born in Memphis, Tennessee. After graduating from Memphis’ Central High school, she earned her B.A. in English in 1973 from Wellesley College. Crossley was also awarded two fellowships at Harvard University – a Nieman fellowship from the Nieman Foundation for Journalism and a fellowship from the Institute of Politics at the John F. Kennedy School of Government. She also served as a Woodrow Wilson Visiting Fellow at The Council of Independent Colleges. Crossley began her career in media and journalism in 1974 as a local news reporter for WREC in Memphis. She then moved to WTHR-TV in Indianapolis, Indiana where she specialized in health reporting, and later was a general assignment reporter for WGBH’s The Ten O’clock News – Boston’s only live, daily, public news program. She returned to WGBH as a news reporter being awarded a Nieman Fellowship in 1982. In 1987, Crossley joined Blackside, Inc. where she worked on the six-hour documentary series “Eyes on the Prize: America’s Civil Rights Years: 1954-1965,” which aired on PBS. While there, she partnered with producer Jim DeVinney to produce, write, and direct two hours of the “Eyes on the Prize” series: “No Easy Walk: 1961-1963” and “Bridge to Freedom: 1965.” Crossley was then brought on as a producer for ABC Television Network’s “20/20” news magazine where her stories focused on health and medicine. In 1989, Crossley became a senior producer for the ABC News primetime special “Black in White America” (1989) and began appearing on WGBH-TV’s media criticism program, “Beat the Press.”

Returning to Blackside, Inc. in 2000, Crossley was made the senior producer for the PBS series, “This Far By Faith: African American Spiritual Journeys.” She joined WGBH Radio in 2010 and began hosting “The Callie Crossley Show,” a one-hour, live, call-in program. On July 9, 2012, she debuted as the host and moderator of the two-hour live “Boston Public Radio;” and, in early 2013, she began hosting “Under the Radar with Callie Crossley.” Crossley has served as host of WGBH-TV’s “Basic Black” and as a television and radio commentator on other local, as well as national programs. She also appeared as a contributor on “The Takeaway,” which aired

on National Public Radio (NPR); Fox Television Station's "Fox 25 Morning News"; "Reliable Sources" on CNN; and "News Hour," which aired on PBS. Crossley has received multiple journalism and film awards, most notably for her work on the acclaimed documentary series "Eyes on the Prize," which earned her an Oscar nomination, a National Emmy, a Peabody Award, an Edward R. Murrow Award, and the Alfred I. DuPont-Columbia Award (Gold Baton). In 2012, the Ford Hall Forum honored her with its George W. Coleman Award; and, in 2013, she received the Wellesley Alumnae Achievement Award. Crossley has an Honorary Doctorate of Arts degree from Pine Manor College and an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Cambridge College.

Callie Crossley was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on April 23, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Callie Crossley was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 23, 2013, in Boston, Massachusetts, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Radio host Callie Crossley (1951 -) earned an Oscar® nomination, a National Emmy and the Alfred I. Dupont-Columbia Award (Gold Baton) for her role producing "Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years 1954-1965." She is a former producer for ABC Television Networks' "20/20" news magazine program and the primetime special "Black in White America."

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:

Crossley, Callie

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Crossley, Callie--Interviews

African American journalists--Interviews.

African American--Producers and directors--Interviews.

African American--Radio personalities--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

WGBH (Radio station : Boston, Mass.)

Occupations:

Radio Host

HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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 Callie Crossley, April 23, 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 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 Callie Crossley, Section A2013_118_001_001, TRT: 1:29:45 ?

Callie Crossley describes her maternal and paternal family history. Her mother, Mattie Lee Robinson, born in 1930, was from Newellton, Louisiana and her father, Samuel Crossley, born in 1924, was from McComb, Mississippi. She remembers visiting her mother's relative, Mama Matt, in Newellton, who was born in slavery. Crossley shares her mother's experience with racism growing up; her mother raised her own children to be open-minded. Her maternal grandparents, sharecroppers from Winter Quarters, Louisiana, were forward thinking in educating Crossley's mother. Her mother lived away from home in order to attend high school; she excelled in her studies through graduate school, and rose to the level of supervisor of secondary education in Memphis, Tennessee. Her father's family owned a large piece of land in McComb. Her father served in World War II, he then used the G.I. bill to attend college. Her parents met at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and moved to Memphis after graduation around 1949.

African American grandparents.

African American mothers--Education.

African American fathers--Education.

Southern University (Baton Rouge, La.).

Video Oral History Interview with Callie Crossley, Section A2013_118_001_002, TRT: 2:29:08 ?

Callie Crossley talks about her parent's early marriage and move to Memphis, Tennessee around 1949. She reminisces about her parent's personalities and her resemblance to her father's friendliness and her mother's open-mindedness. Her parents were well liked and respected in their mostly black community in South Memphis. Crossley's mother often mentored students. Crossley also describes her close relationship with her younger sister Fayre, who was four years her junior and later attended Wellesley College after Crossley. Crossley recalls the closeness of her neighborhood and church, and shares early childhood memories and impressions of her community. She talks about her family's love of reading. Crossley recounts her earlier school experiences and how she excelled particularly in reading and writing when attending Dunn Elementary, Cory Junior High, and later Central High School in Memphis, Tennessee in the 1950s and 1960s.

African American parents.

African American neighborhoods--Tennessee--Memphis.

African Americans--Mentoring--Tennessee--Memphis.

Brothers and sisters--Tennessee--Memphis.

Childhood and youth--Tennessee--Memphis.

Wellesley College.

African Americans--Education--Tennessee--Memphis.

Video Oral History Interview with Callie Crossley, Section A2013_118_001_003, TRT: 3:28:19 ?

Callie Crossley describes being one of the first nineteen black students to attend Central High School in Memphis, Tennessee. This resulted from a suit that was filed on behalf of Deborah Northcross in 1968 by the NAACP against the Board of Education in Memphis. Crossley describes the racism and ignorance she endured there, particularly from students in her history. At Central High School, she fought her way onto the school paper, and relied on her parents' guidance throughout her education. Crossley also shares her experiences leading up to the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. She had become actively engaged in the youth chapter of the NAACP and had witnessed Martin Luther King's 'Mountaintop Speech' in the rain the day prior to his assassination. After graduating from high school with high grades, she went on to attend Wellesley College in Massachusetts. Her experience at Wellesley was positive, and she recalls being part of a black student organization, Ethos.

School integration--Tennessee--Memphis.

Racism in education--Tennessee--Memphis.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968--Assassination.

Wellesley College.

Video Oral History Interview with Callie Crossley, Section A2013_118_001_004, TRT: 4:30:00 ?

Callie Crossley shares memories of people who influenced her at Wellesley College, Massachusetts, including a memorable visit from Stokely Carmichael, and her interest in broadcast journalism. After graduating from Wellesley College, Crossley returned home to Memphis, Tennessee where she was hired at the Memphis T.V. station WREC in 1973. She shares what it was like being one of the very few black female journalists in the 1970s. Crossley then moved to a "top twenty" market in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1977. She recalls her first National Association of Black Journalists conference in Louisville, Kentucky in 1981. In 1980, she moved to WGBH in Boston, Massachusetts and entered into public broadcasting, which gave her the opportunity to participate in a different form of broadcasting. Rochelle Coleman

Wellesley College.

Carmichael, Stokely.

Women journalists--United States.

National Association of Black Journalists.

WGBH (Radio station : Boston, Mass.).

Video Oral History Interview with Callie Crossley, Section A2013_118_001_005, TRT: 5:28:05 ?

Callie Crossley describes her experiences in the 1980s and what value it had to its audience working at WGBH in Boston. It provided her with experience in longer form stories. Crossley also recalls early stories from the 'Ten O'clock News' about trans-racial adoption and HIV. She describes WGBH's forte in artistic and children's programming. While in Boston in the 1980s, Crossley received a Neiman Foundation Fellowship to attend Harvard University. Then, she describes working with Henry Hampton on his Civil Rights Movement documentary 'Eyes on the Prize'. She recalls "talking her way" onto the job, and advocating her reporting and interview skills. Crossley produced hours four and six of the series, and recalls it as going to a "Civil Rights school". She recounts some of the financial and other challenges of working there at Blackside, Inc.,

Hampton's production company.
WGBH (Radio station : Boston, Mass.).
Hampton, Henry, 1940-1998.
Broadcast journalism.
Harvard University.
Civil rights movements.
Blackside, Inc.

Video Oral History Interview with Callie Crossley, Section A2013_118_001_006, TRT: 6:29:46 ?

Callie Crossley shares some of her favorite memories of working on the 1987 'Eyes on the Prize' documentary about the Civil Rights Movement. She remembers interviews from Sheriff Pritchett and Dr. Anderson from Albany, Georgia, as well as from activists Rosa Parks and Fred Shuttlesworth. Crossley recalls her pride in the documentary, but her disappointment in not winning an Academy Award. In 1988, she moved to ABC T.V., where she produced for '20/20'. She recalls a favorite story about a family devastated by the loss of a child. Crossley then describes working on the 1989 ABC TV production of 'Black in White in America' and how it was a different and disappointing experience from 'Eyes on the Prize'. When Disney bought ABC TV in 2001, Crossley left and returned to WGBH in Boston. In 2003, she produced 'This Far By Faith: African American Spiritual Journeys' at PBS. In 2010, she began her own radio show on WGBH, 'The Callie Crossley Show.'

Civil rights movements.
Academy Awards (Motion pictures).
ABC Entertainment.
WGBH (Radio station : Boston, Mass.).
Public Broadcasting Service (U.S.).
20/20 (Television program).

Video Oral History Interview with Callie Crossley, Section A2013_118_001_007, TRT: 7:23:11 ?

Callie Crossley talks about her work on 'The Callie Crossley Show' on WGBH in Boston as well as the end of her show in 2012. Some of her memorable guests include Howard Zinn, Wayne Brady, and author David Rees. She talks about her awards and receiving the 2013 Distinguished Alumni Achievement award from Wellesley College. Crossley has hosted WGBH's 'Under the Radar with Callie Crossley' since 2013. She discusses her hopes for the African American community, highlighting a wish for the community to continue surviving and thriving. Crossley talks about her legacy, and how she wants to be remembered. She feels her most important achievement both personally and professionally, in terms of her legacy, is her production of 'Eyes on the Prize.'

WGBH (Radio station : Boston, Mass.).
Zinn, Howard, 1922-2010.
Wellesley College.