

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Audrey Collins

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Collins, Audrey B., 1945-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Audrey Collins,
Dates:	December 18, 2013 and November 14, 2014
Bulk Dates:	2013 and 2014
Physical Description:	8 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:55:02).
Abstract:	Federal district court judge The Honorable Audrey Collins (1945 -) served in the Central District of California from 1994 to 2013. She was the court's chief judge from 2009 to 2012. Collins was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 18, 2013 and November 14, 2014, in Los Angeles, California and Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_344
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Federal District Court Judge Audrey B. Collins was born on June 12, 1945 in Chester, Pennsylvania to Dr. Furman L. Brodie Jr. and Audrey Moseley Brodie. She attended Yeadon High School in Yeadon, Pennsylvania, where she graduated as valedictorian of her class. Collins attended Howard University in Washington, D.C. and graduated Phi Beta Kappa, earning her B.A. degree in political science in 1967. That year, she received Howard University's Woman of the Year Award and married her husband, Dr. Tim Collins. In 1969, she earned her M.A. degree in public administration from American University's School of Government and

Public Administration. In 1974, Collins returned to school to earn her law degree from the University of California at Los Angeles. She was a member of the *UCLA Law Review*, and earned her J.D. degree in 1977, graduating with the Order of the Coif.

In 1977, Collins served as an assistant attorney of the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, and in 1978, she was hired as a deputy district attorney of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office. In 1987, Collins was promoted to head deputy at the Torrance Branch office. She was then appointed as the assistant director of the Bureaus of Central and Special Operations the following year. In 1992, she was named the assistant district attorney and a deputy general counsel in the Office of the Special Advisor, where she served as counsel to the Los Angeles Police Department Board of Commissioners. Two years later, President Bill Clinton nominated Collins for a seat on the District Court for the Central District of California. She served as chief judge for the court from 2009 through September, 2012.

In 1988, Collins received the Loren Miller Lawyer of the Year Award by the John M. Langston Bar Association. In 1994, she was awarded the National Black Prosecutors Association's Distinguished Service Award, and, in 2006, she was presented with the Bernard Jefferson Judge of the Year Award by the John M. Langston Bar Association. In 2012, Collins was awarded both the Outstanding Jurist Award from the Los Angeles County Bar Association and the Joan Dempsey Klein Distinguished Jurist Award. She is a member of the National Bar Association, the Los Angeles County Bar Association, the Black Women Lawyers of Los Angeles County, the John M. Langston Bar Association, Women Lawyers of Los Angeles, and the National Association of Women Judges.

Collins and her husband have two adult children, one whom is an actor and the other an attorney.

Judge Audrey B. Collins was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on December 18, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Audrey Collins was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 18, 2013 and November 14, 2014, in Los Angeles, California and Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 8 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Federal district court judge The Honorable Audrey Collins (1945 -) served in the Central District of California from 1994 to 2013.

She was the court's chief judge from 2009 to 2012.

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:

Collins, Audrey B., 1945-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Collins, Audrey B., 1945---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Federal District Court Judge

HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers

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 Audrey Collins, December 18, 2013 and November 14, 2014. 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 The Honorable Audrey Collins,
Section A2013_344_001_001, TRT: 1:29:03 2013/12/18

The Honorable Audrey Collins was born on June 12, 1945 in Chester, Pennsylvania to Audrey Moseley Brodie and Furman Brodie, Jr. Collins' maternal grandparents, Rachel Moseley and Ernest Moseley, lived in Norfolk, Virginia. They were educated through high school, and her grandfather worked as a mail clerk on the railroad. Collins' mother received a scholarship from the State of Virginia to attend the University of Michigan, where she completed a bachelor's degree and master's degree. Collins' paternal grandfather, Furman Brodie, Sr., was born a slave in South Carolina in 1856. After his intellect was noticed by visiting missionaries, he was sent to be educated in Onarga, Illinois. He studied at Biddle University in Charlotte, North Carolina, and then returned to his family in Due West, South Carolina, where Collins' father was born. Her father attended Meharry Medical College School of Dentistry, and met her mother at church in Chester, Pennsylvania.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Audrey Collins,
Section A2013_344_001_002, TRT: 2:28:36 2013/12/18

The Honorable Audrey Collins and her younger brothers,

Furman Brodie III and Bruce Brodie, were born in Chester, Pennsylvania in the late 1940s. Collins' family belonged to a local Presbyterian church, and she attended a Quaker preschool. As World War II ended, the local economy waned, and Collins' family moved to Yeadon, Pennsylvania in 1951. They bought a house on the all-white Lincoln Avenue, which was vandalized and flooded after the neighbors discovered they were African American. Collins' family also integrated the First Presbyterian Church of Lansdowne. Eventually, many black families moved to the area, including that of future film historian Donald Bogle, with whom Collins shared an interest in the actress Elizabeth Taylor. Collins enrolled at Yeadon's William B. Evans Elementary School, where she excelled academically. Her mother taught English in the School District of Philadelphia, where her students included future basketball stars Wilt Chamberlain, Wali Jones and Walt Hazzard.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Audrey Collins,
Section A2013_344_001_003, TRT: 3:30:17 2013/12/18

The Honorable Audrey Collins attended Yeadon Junior Senior High School in Yeadon, Pennsylvania during the late 1950s. She held leadership positions in the student government and Future Nurses of America, and aspired to pursue a career in medicine. After struggling to learn chemistry, her interests shifted to government and law. Collins received her diploma in 1963, and decided to enroll at Howard University with the encouragement of her mother, Audrey Moseley Brodie. During her first year, President John Fitzgerald Kennedy was assassinated, and Collins attended the placement of his casket in state at the U.S. Capitol. While at Howard University, Collins saw President Lyndon Baines Johnson speak, and joined the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. Civil rights leaders like H. Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael were on campus at the time, and Collins developed an interest in criminal defense. Shortly after graduating, she married dental student Timothy R. Collins, and began a master's degree at American University.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Audrey Collins,
Section A2013_344_001_004, TRT: 4:29:33 2013/12/18

The Honorable Audrey Collins' husband, Timothy R. Collins, received his dental degree and joined the U.S. Public Health Service in the late 1960s. For the next two years, the couple lived in Terre Haute, Indiana and Denver, Colorado, where Collins' husband provided dental care to prison inmates and incarcerated youth. Next, Collins moved with her husband to Los Angeles, California. She initially taught middle school, and then became the director of the University of Southern California's Norman Topping Student Aid Fund. In 1974, Collins entered the School of Law at the University of California, Los Angeles. She faced discrimination because of her age and race, and her white peers tried to deny her access to programs for minority students. Upon graduating, Collins joined the law firm of Gibson, Dunn and Crutcher LLP. She secured a position in the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office with help from law professor Addison Mueller. Collins also remembers the riots after the police beating of Rodney King.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Audrey Collins,
Section A2013_344_001_005, TRT: 5:28:23 2013/12/18

The Honorable Audrey Collins was a member of the Committee of Bar Examiners, where she served as the chairperson of the Subcommittee on Moral Character in 1992. Two years later, she received President Bill Clinton's first judicial nomination to the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California. There, Collins presided over a variety of cases, including corporate litigation, criminal cases and lawsuits involving the Fair Labor Standards Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. In 2003, Collins became one of the first judges to challenge the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001, when she ruled that sections the law were vague in the decision of Humanitarian Law Project v. Reno. She also oversaw cases involving the removal of nativity scenes from public property, and a U.S. Marine who was denied access to his child. Additionally, Collins talks about the case of the State of California v. Soon Ja Du in 1991, which contributed to the civil unrest in Los Angeles in 1992.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Audrey Collins,
Section A2013_344_002_006, TRT: 6:31:14 2014/11/14

The Honorable Audrey Collins joined the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office in 1978. There, her colleagues included Johnnie Cochran, who defended Collins when she was chastised for taking on work that was usually reserved for more experienced staff members. Collins served as the legal advisor to the grand jury during her early years in the district attorney's office. In 1987, she became the head deputy of the district attorney's office branch in Torrance, California. From 1988 to 1992, she served as an assistant bureau director, and then became an assistant district attorney. Although Collins was disinterested in politics, her peers encouraged her to apply for a federal judgeship. She met with U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein, who recommended that President Bill Clinton nominate her to the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California. At this point, Collins talks about the changes in the criminal justice system of Los Angeles, California.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Audrey Collins,
Section A2013_344_002_007, TRT: 7:30:33 2014/11/14

The Honorable Audrey Collins was appointed to the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California by President Bill Clinton in 1994. At the time, she was one of a few African American federal judges in California. Her predecessors included David W. Williams, Consuelo Bland Marshall and Terry J. Hatter, Jr. As a federal district judge, Collins was responsible for civil and criminal cases in the Los Angeles area. She presided over a lawsuit between The Beach Boys members Mike Love and Brian Wilson, as well as a series of challenges to the City of Los Angeles' billboard ordinance. In 2006, Collins won the Bernard Jefferson Justice of the Year Award, and her brother, attorney Bruce Brodie, won the John Mercer Langston Bar Association's Loren Miller Lawyer of the Year Award. In 2009, Collins was promoted to chief judge of U.S. District Court for the Central District of California. She also describes the Substance Abuse Treatment and Reentry Program and the Conviction and Sentence Alternatives Program.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Audrey Collins,
Section A2013_344_002_008, TRT: 8:27:23 2014/11/14

The Honorable Audrey Collins ruled in 2011 that prisons in Orange County, California prisons must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The following year, she accepted an appointment to Division Four of the California Second District Court of Appeal. At this point in the interview, Collins describes her judicial philosophy, her concerns for the African American community and her plans for the future. She also reflects upon her life, legacy and how she would like to be remembered.