

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Margot Copeland

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: | Copeland, Margot James, 1951- |
| Title: | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Margot Copeland, |
| Dates: | February 10, 2014 |
| Bulk Dates: | 2014 |
| Physical Description: | 8 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:33:57). |
| Abstract: | Corporate executive Margot Copeland (1951 -) served as the executive vice president of diversity and chair of the foundation at KeyCorp from 2001. She was also national president of The Links, Incorporated. Copeland was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 10, 2014, in Cleveland, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| Identification: | A2014_045 |
| Language: | The interview and records are in English. |

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Corporate executive Margot James Copeland was born on December 4, 1951 in Richmond, Virginia. She was the only child to her parents, Reverend William Lloyd Garrison James, a Baptist minister, and Thelma Taylor James, an eighth grade math teacher. Copeland earned her B.S. degree in physics from Hampton University, and her M.A. degree in educational research and statistics from The Ohio State University.

Copeland began her corporate career at Xerox Corporation, Polaroid, and Picker

International. In 1992, she was hired as executive director for Leadership Cleveland, a program of the Greater Cleveland Growth Association that develops community leaders. After seven years at Leadership Cleveland, Copeland became president and CEO of the Greater Cleveland Roundtable, a nonprofit organization founded to improve multicultural and multiracial relations in the Cleveland area. She joined KeyCorp in 2001, and served as executive vice president - director, corporate diversity and philanthropy and as an executive council member. KeyCorp is one of the nation's largest bank-based financial services companies and, within her position as chair and CEO of the KeyBank Foundation, she managed the company's annual \$20 million philanthropic investment program and oversaw diversity initiatives. KeyCorp has been included in *DiversityInc* magazine's list of 50 Top Companies for Diversity in 2005, 2007, 2008, and 2009 and ranked 13th among the most generous cash giving companies in America in a 2003 list published by BusinessWeek. In 2013, the KeyBank Foundation was recognized as a Civic 50 Company by the National Conference on Citizenship, Points of Light and Bloomberg LP.

Copeland has participated in a number of community organizations and boards. In 2010, she became the fifteenth president of The Links, Inc. She has also served as the president of the Junior League of Cleveland, Inc., sat on the Kent State University board of trustees, acted as Mentor/Protégé Program Advisor for Morehouse College, and is a member of the Business School Advisory board at Hampton University.

Copeland was listed as one of the "100 Most Powerful Women in Cleveland" by *New Cleveland Woman* magazine, and in 2012, *Savoy* magazine included her in a list of the "100 Most Influential Blacks in Corporate America." She is also the recipient of the YWCA Career Woman of Achievement Award; was the 2006 Black Professional of the Year as recognized by Black Professionals Association Charitable Foundation; received the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. Community Service Award; and the W.O. Walker Excellence in Community Service Award, sponsored by the *Call and Post* newspaper. Copeland also received the distinguished Alumnus of the Year Award in 2013 from Hampton University.

Copeland lives in Cleveland, Ohio and has three children, Reverend Kimberley, Dr. Garrison, and Michael Copeland.

Copeland was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 10, 2014.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Margot Copeland was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 10, 2014, in Cleveland, Ohio, and was recorded on 8 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Corporate executive Margot Copeland (1951 -) served as the executive vice president of diversity and chair of the foundation at KeyCorp from 2001. She was also national president of The Links, Incorporated.

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:

Copeland, Margot James, 1951-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Copeland, Margot James, 1951---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Corporate Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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 Margot Copeland, February 10, 2014. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral

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 Margot Copeland, Section
A2014_045_001_001, TRT: 1:29:11 2014/02/10

Margot Copeland was born on December 4, 1951 in Richmond, Virginia to Thelma Taylor James and William James. Her paternal grandmother, Annie James, was the illegitimate child of a white landowning family in Virginia, and was adopted by their African American domestic servant. Copeland's grandmother married an educated black man named William James, who left her to become a dean at Delaware State University. From that time, she raised Copeland's father and uncle on her own. Copeland's maternal grandparents, Matthew Taylor and Mary Jane Taylor, had a limited education, and sent five of their children to college. Her maternal uncle, Theodore Taylor, was the first African American to pass the Virginia bar examination. Copeland's mother attended the Virginia State College for Negroes, and earned a master's degree from the University of Chicago. She went on to teach math to the children of sharecroppers, hoping to keep them from being cheated by landowners. She also joined

The Links and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority.

Video Oral History Interview with Margot Copeland, Section
A2014_045_001_002, TRT: 2:29:00 2014/02/10

Margot Copeland's father, William James, grew up in Virginia, where he sold newspapers and worked odd jobs from an early age. As a young man, he moved to the Northeast to work in domestic service. While there, he pitched for a Negro League baseball team. He decided to return to Richmond, Virginia to study at the Bishop Payne Divinity School, and went on to pastor the Bethany Baptist Church in Petersburg, Virginia. There, he met and married Copeland's mother, Thelma Taylor James, at the age of forty-eight years old. Copeland spent her early years in her maternal family's home in Petersburg, and moved with her parents to the middle class African American suburb of Colonial Heights, Virginia in 1960. During school integration, the local districts were gerrymandered so that Copeland and her middle class neighbors were forced to attend Matoaca High School, which was located in a poor, rural white community with a strong Ku Klux Klan presence.

Video Oral History Interview with Margot Copeland, Section
A2014_045_001_003, TRT: 3:28:08 2014/02/10

Margot Copeland began her education in the late 1950s at Giles B. Cooke Elementary School in Petersburg, Virginia. During the third grade, she transferred to Westview Elementary School, where she participated in the art program. Copeland went on to help integrate Matoaca High School in Chesterfield County, Virginia, where she and her black peers were met with violence from the white students and community members. From an early age, Copeland excelled in her science classes, and was encouraged by her mother, Thelma Taylor James. She considered attending Virginia State College or North Carolina Central University, but decided to enroll at the Hampton Institute, where she was offered a scholarship after attending a pre-college program. Copeland began college in 1969, and was the only female physics major in her cohort. She studied under professors Kwang Soo Han and Stepan V. Benda, who helped her secure a summer position at the Argonne National Laboratory in Lemont,

Illinois.

Video Oral History Interview with Margot Copeland, Section
A2014_045_001_004, TRT: 4:29:35 2014/02/10

Margot Copeland graduated with a physics degree from the Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia in 1973. She decided not to pursue a career in physics, and applied to master's degree programs at Northwestern University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and The Ohio State University. There, the head of minority affairs, Frank W. Hale, Jr., offered her a full scholarship. She studied educational development under James B. Gunnell, and chose courses that emphasized research and statistics. Upon graduating in 1974, Copeland worked as a staffer for Ohio state legislator William L. Mallory, Sr., who served on the Legislative Service Commission and the Ohio House Committee on Transportation and Urban Affairs. After applying to work at IBM, Copeland secured an opportunity to pursue her interest in business in the sales division of the Xerox Corporation. Finding herself unsatisfied with commission based sales, Copeland obtained a customer service management position at the Polaroid Corporation.

Video Oral History Interview with Margot Copeland, Section
A2014_045_001_005, TRT: 5:29:55 2014/02/10

Margot Copeland joined the Polaroid Corporation as a customer service manager in 1977. She traveled frequently and managed customer inquiries for new product releases. After nine months, Copeland was promoted to distribution center manager for the Midwest region. In 1979, she married Terrence Copeland, and the Polaroid Corporation decided to move its Midwest office to Chicago, Illinois. Copeland decided against relocating, and began working in human resources (HR) at Ameritrust Bank in 1980. Four years later, she joined the HR department of Picker International, Inc., a diagnostic imaging manufacturer. During this time, Copeland joined the Junior League and The Links, and served as chapter president of both organizations. In 2007, she became The Links' central district president, and rose to the national presidency in 2010. Additionally, Copeland talks about her parents' civil rights activism and her maternal uncle, Theodore Taylor,

who was the first African American to pass the Virginia bar examination.

Video Oral History Interview with Margot Copeland, Section
A2014_045_001_006, TRT: 6:28:47 2014/02/10

Margot Copeland was introduced to the Junior League through an event at the Olivet Institutional Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio. She became the president of Junior League of Cleveland in 1991. That year, Copeland also took part in the Leadership Cleveland program, where she was hired as executive director in 1992. In that role, Copeland helped increase awareness about homelessness, gang violence and inequity at women's prisons among the political and business leadership of Cleveland. In 1997 and 1998, she took the Leadership Cleveland participants to Harvard University to learn more about urban development and the importance of focusing on communities and public education. Copeland also helped educate the white participants about racism, pointing out that taxi drivers were intentionally avoiding the African American members when the group was leaving a restaurant. Copeland also remembers the Cleveland Bicentennial Commission, and talks about the accomplishments of Cleveland Mayor Michael R. White.

Video Oral History Interview with Margot Copeland, Section
A2014_045_001_007, TRT: 7:29:57 2014/02/10

Margot Copeland left Leadership Cleveland to join the Greater Cleveland Roundtable in 1999. There, she worked on economic development projects, and served as a diversity consultant at local companies. In 2001, Copeland joined KeyCorp as the executive vice president of corporate diversity and philanthropy. She also became the chairwoman and CEO of the company's KeyBank Foundation. In this capacity, Copeland established the KeyBank Classrooms for STEM Education program, which provided local high school students with access to facilities at Cleveland State University. At this point in the interview, Copeland talks about the emphasis on civic engagement at KeyCorp, and the importance of public service. She also recalls her mentorship of a high school student who aspired to become a biomedical engineer. At this point, Copeland reflects upon her life and legacy, and

describes her plans for the future.

Video Oral History Interview with Margot Copeland, Section
A2014_045_001_008, TRT: 8:09:24 2014/02/10

Margot Copeland describes how she would like to be remembered, and concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.