

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable C. Ellen Connally

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Connally, C. Ellen, 1945-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable C. Ellen Connally,
Dates:	February 14, 2014
Bulk Dates:	2014
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:40:10).
Abstract:	Judge The Honorable C. Ellen Connally (1945 -) served as a judge of the Cleveland Municipal Court from 1980 to 2004. She was the first African American female judge elected in Ohio without first being appointed. Connally was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 14, 2014, in Cleveland, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2014_070
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Judge C. Ellen Connally was born on January 26, 1945 in Cleveland, Ohio to George and Gwendolyn Johnson Connally. She attended St. Thomas Aquinas Elementary School and graduated from the Notre Dame Academy in Cleveland, Ohio in 1963. Connally received her B.S. degree in social studies from Bowling Green State University in 1967, and her J.D. degree from Cleveland State University in 1970.

In 1971, Connally was hired as a law clerk for Ohio's 8th District Court of Appeals. From 1972 to 1979, she worked as a trial referee in the Probate Division of the Cuyahoga County Court of Common Pleas. In 1980, Connally was elected a judge of the Cleveland Municipal Court and became the first African American female elected judge in Ohio without being first appointed. She was re-elected in 1985, 1991 and 1997.

In 1998, Connally received her M.A. degree in American history from Cleveland State University. She then went on to attend Akron University and completed all coursework towards a Ph.D. degree in American history.

In 2004, Connally retired from the Cleveland Municipal Court and ran for chief justice of the Ohio Supreme Court. She then worked as an adjunct professor of history at Ursuline College from 2005 to 2006, and as a visiting and adjunct professor of law at the University of Akron College of Law from 2006 to 2008. In 2009, she was appointed special prosecutor for the City of Cleveland. In 2010, Connally was elected to the Cuyahoga City Council, the legislative branch of the county government, and was elected president of the council in 2010 and re-elected in 2012.

Connally has served as president of the Board of Trustees of Bowling Green State University, president of the Board of Trustees of the Breast Cancer Fund of Ohio, vice president of the Board of Community Action Against Addiction, vice president for Traffic Safety - Greater Cleveland Safety Council, and president of the Northern Ohio Municipal Judges Association. In addition, Connally served on the Mayor's Task Force on Violent Crime, and on

the Executive Committee of the Cleveland Civil War Roundtable. She has also been a member of numerous boards, including the Cleveland Bar Foundation, the Cleveland Society for the Blind, the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, the Cleveland Public Theater, the Girls and Boys Club of Cleveland, and the Ohio Judicial College. A long time student of the Kennedy Assassination, Connally currently lectures on the subject in programs of continuing legal education and currently serves on the Board of Trustees of the Ohio Historical Society and the Cleveland State University Foundation Board.

Connally has received the 1997 Achievement Award from Cleveland State University's History Department; a 1999 Certificate of Special Appreciation from Mothers Against Drunk Driving; the 2001 Alumni of the Year Award from the Cleveland Marshall College of Law; the Cuyahoga County Criminal Defense Lawyers Association's John J. McMahon Outstanding Jurist Award; and 2004's National Legacy Award, presented by Councilman Zachary Reed.

Connally lives in the Shaker Square area of Cleveland with her two rescue dogs. She is the mother of one son, Seth, an Iraq War Veteran.

C. Ellen Connally was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 14, 2014.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable C. Ellen Connally was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 14, 2014, in Cleveland, Ohio, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Judge The Honorable C. Ellen Connally (1945 -) served as a judge of the Cleveland Municipal Court from 1980 to 2004. She was the first African American female judge elected in Ohio without first being appointed.

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:

Connally, C. Ellen, 1945-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Connally, C. Ellen, 1945---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

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 C. Ellen Connally, February 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 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 C. Ellen Connally, Section
A2014_070_001_001, TRT: 1:29:34 ?

The Honorable C. Ellen Connally was born on January 26, 1945 in Cleveland, Ohio to Gwendolyn Johnson Connally and George L. Connally, Jr. Her maternal grandmother, Cecelia Ladeveze Johnson, was originally from Augusta, Georgia, where many of her family members passed for white. Connally's maternal great uncle, John Ladeveze, was involved in the 1899 school segregation case, *Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education*, which was overruled in 1954 by *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. Connally's maternal grandfather, Charles C. Johnson, was a physician who graduated from the Howard University College of Medicine. Connally's father was born in Griffin, Georgia to landowners Rossie Connally and George L. Connally, Sr. After their divorce, he moved with his father to Chicago, Illinois. He went on to study business administration at the Tuskegee Institute, and founded the Connally Insurance Agency in Cleveland. There, Connally grew up in Glenville, which was a predominantly Jewish neighborhood.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable C. Ellen Connally, Section
A2014_070_001_002, TRT: 2:28:12 ?

The Honorable C. Ellen Connally began her education at the St. Thomas Aquinas School in Cleveland, Ohio. At home, she read the *Call and Post* and *The Plain Dealer* newspapers, and took piano lessons from Leota Palmer Apple, who was the mother of acclaimed pianist Natalie Henderson Hinderas. Connally also sought membership in Jack and Jill of America, Inc., but was rejected due to her father's early occupation as a milkman. He later founded the Connally Insurance Agency, and became acquainted with Cleveland Mayor Anthony J. Celebrezze and Judge Theodore M. Williams. Connally went on to attend the Notre Dame Academy, where she joined the World Affairs Councils of America. She was inspired to pursue a legal career by Judge Jean Murrell Capers. After graduating from high school in 1963, Connally enrolled at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio. She recalls President John Fitzgerald Kennedy's assassination, and the subsequent investigation led by Judge Earl Warren.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable C. Ellen Connally, Section
A2014_070_001_003, TRT: 3:29:56 ?

The Honorable C. Ellen Connally graduated from Bowling Green State University in January of 1967. She then entered the Cleveland-Marshall College of Law in Cleveland, Ohio, where she was the only female student. During her studies, Connally worked at the law firm of Stokes, Character, Terry, Perry, Whitehead, Young and Davidson, and assisted in the congressional and mayoral campaigns of Louis Stokes and Carl Stokes. After her graduation in 1970, she joined the law office full time. From there, she clerked for two years under Judge Alvin Krenzler in the Eighth District Court of Appeals of Ohio, and then worked as a magistrate in the Probate Court of Cuyahoga County, Ohio. In

1979, Connally became the first African American female Democrat elected to the Cleveland Municipal Court. In this role, she ruled on domestic violence cases, and a court case involving punk singer Wendy O. Williams. Connally also recalls her breast cancer diagnosis and mastectomy, as well as the adoption of her son, Seth Connally.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable C. Ellen Connally, Section A2014_070_001_004, TRT: 4:28:39 ?

The Honorable C. Ellen Connally led a successful campaign to become a judge in the Cleveland Municipal Court in 1979. In this position, she oversaw a variety of criminal cases including prostitution, where she often dismissed the case if the buyer was not also charged. While there, Connally worked with the former Mayor Carl Stokes, who also served as a judge. In 1982, she lost the judicial election for the Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court to Richard M. Markus. Later, she ran for chief justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio, but was unsuccessful. In 1998, Connally earned her master's degree in American history from Cleveland State University, and began a Ph.D. degree at Case Western Reserve University. While conducting research on legal issues in the Civil War era, Connally published an article in the Journal of Supreme Court History about the Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education case of 1899. She also talks about her interest in Confederate President Jefferson Davis and Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable C. Ellen Connally, Section A2014_070_001_005, TRT: 5:29:23 ?

The Honorable C. Ellen Connally ran in the general election for chief justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio in 2004. She was endorsed by the Ohio Democratic Party, but due to a lack of funds and community support, she was not elected. Connally served as a visiting professor of law at the University of Akron, and was later hired as an adjunct criminal law professor. She also taught African American history at Ursuline College in Pepper Pike, Ohio. In her brief role as a special prosecutor, Connally ruled on police cases involving deadly force shootings. In addition to her legal career, she served on the board of the Ohio Historical Society, and wrote editorials for The Plain Dealer and Cool Cleveland. In 2010, Connally was elected president of the Cuyahoga County Council. At this point in the interview, she talks about her plans for the future, and shares her views on the Ohio Democratic Party. She also describes her concerns for the African American community and the education system in Cleveland.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable C. Ellen Connally, Section A2014_070_001_006, TRT: 6:14:26 ?

The Honorable C. Ellen Connally reflects upon the public response to the assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy in 1963. She also talks about her family, including her son, Seth Connally, and her distant relatives who passed for white. Connally concludes the interview by reflecting upon her life, legacy and how she would like to be remembered.