

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with A. Grace Lee Mims

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Mims, A. Grace Lee
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with A. Grace Lee Mims,
Dates:	February 14, 2014
Bulk Dates:	2014
Physical Description:	5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:30:09).
Abstract:	Radio host and vocalist A. Grace Lee Mims (1930 - 2019) hosted “The Black Arts” and “Artslog” on Cleveland’s WCLV-FM radio for over thirty years. She was an accomplished vocalist and a voice teacher at the Cleveland Music School Settlement since 1980. Mims was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 14, 2014, in East Cleveland, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2014_071
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Radio host and vocalist A. Grace Lee Mims was born on July 17, 1930 in Snow Hill, Alabama to musicians Arnold W. and Alberta Grace Edwards Lee. Mims graduated valedictorian from Snow Hill Institute, which was founded by her grandfather. She went on to attend and graduate from Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia, and later received her M.L.S degree from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio.

Upon graduation, Mims married Howard A. Mims. She was also hired as a librarian in Detroit, Michigan before moving to Cleveland, where she worked at several branches of the Cleveland Public Library. Mims was employed as head librarian at Glenville High School for ten years, where she coordinated the Black Arts Festival, established the most extensive collection of books on African American history and culture in the State of Ohio, and helped found the first Afrocentric lecture course in the Cleveland Public Schools. In 1976, she created and became hostess and producer of “The Black Arts” on WCLV-FM, Cleveland’s classical music radio station. From 1980 to 2010, Mims produced and hosted WCLV’s “Artslog,” a daily five-minute show of interviews. Also in 1980, she was hired as a voice teacher at the Cleveland Music School Settlement.

Mims has served as soprano soloist at Fairmount Presbyterian Church, as soloist with the William Appling singers, as well as throughout the Cleveland area. She was a member of The Cleveland Orchestra Chorus and Chamber Chorus under Robert Shaw, and performed with The New York Bass Violin Choir. In addition, Mims has recorded two albums: “Spirituals,” a solo record, and “A Spirit Speaks” with her family’s jazz-folk ensemble, The Descendants of Mike and Phoebe.

Mims received numerous honors, including an honorary doctorate of music from Cleveland State University in 1999. In 2007, she was the honoree of the Greater Cleveland Chapter of The National Coalition of the 100 Black Women, Inc., and a recipient the Cleveland Arts Prize Martha Joseph Award in 2011. Mims also served on many

arts-related boards, including the Cleveland Institute of Music, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Cleveland Orchestra's Community Project, the Cleveland Arts Prize Committee, the Western Reserve Historical Society's Black History Archives and The Rainey Institute. Mims and her husband ran the Cleveland Hampton Institute Alumni Scholarship program for over thirty years.

Mims passed away on October 4, 2019.

A. Grace Lee Mims was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 14, 2014.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with A. Grace Lee Mims was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 14, 2014, in East Cleveland, Ohio, and was recorded on 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Radio host and vocalist A. Grace Lee Mims (1930 - 2019) hosted “The Black Arts” and “Artslog” on Cleveland’s WCLV-FM radio for over thirty years. She was an accomplished vocalist and a voice teacher at the Cleveland Music School Settlement since 1980.

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:

Mims, A. Grace Lee

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Mims, A. Grace Lee--Interviews

African American librarians--Interviews.

African American civic leaders--Interviews.

African American musicians--Interviews.

Women radio producers and directors--Ohio--Cleveland--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Radio Host

Vocalist

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 A. Grace Lee Mims, 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 A. Grace Lee Mims, Section A2014_071_001_001, TRT: 1:26:40 ?

A. Grace Lee Mims describes her family background. Her maternal grandfather, William James Edwards, attended Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama. His experiences at the school inspired him to found Snow Hill Industrial and Normal Institute in Snow Hill, Alabama in 1893. Mims' mother, Alberta Edwards Lee, was born in Snow Hill in 1902. A piano prodigy, she attended the New England Conservatory of Music, Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and Alabama State University in Montgomery, Alabama. Mims' father, Arnold Lee, was born during the late 19th century in Selma, Alabama. He attended Tuskegee Institute, where he studied electrical engineering. Lee met Mims' mother in Snow Hill, Alabama, after which the two eloped in Nashville, Tennessee. Mims describes how her parents' love of music influenced her childhood, as well.

Edwards, William James, 1869-1950.

Tuskegee Institute.

African American parents.

New England Conservatory of Music.

Fisk University.

Alabama State University.

Childhood--Music.

Snow Hill Normal and Industrial Institute (Ala.).

Video Oral History Interview with A. Grace Lee Mims, Section A2014_071_001_002, TRT: 2:28:37 ?

A. Grace Lee Mims discusses her parents' careers. Her mother, Alberta Edwards Lee, studied at the New England Conservatory of Music, Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and Alabama State University in Montgomery, Alabama. She went on to work as a choir instructor at Snow Hill Normal and Industrial Institute in Snow Hill, Alabama. Arnold Lee studied electrical engineering at Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama, and traveled to find work through much of Mims' childhood. He also directed the band at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University. Mims describes her parents' personalities, and talks about her siblings, including the musical band they formed while they were children. She describes attending Snow Hill Normal and Industrial Institute, and how her teachers and parents influenced her college and career decisions. Mims describes how her hometown church shaped her love of music, and shares her knowledge of gospel music, negro spirituals, and African Americans who shaped American music.

African American parents--Education.

Snow Hill Normal and Industrial Institute (Ala.).

Music teachers.

Vocational guidance--Alabama--Snow Hill.

African American families--Alabama--Snow Hill.

African American churches--Alabama--Snow Hill.

Video Oral History Interview with A. Grace Lee Mims, Section A2014_071_001_003, TRT: 3:29:00 ?

A. Grace Lee Mims shares memories of her grandfather, William James Edwards. Edwards founded Snow Hill Industrial and Normal Institute in 1893, which Mims graduated from in 1948. She began attending Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia in 1948, where she was involved in Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and was selected as Homecoming Queen. She met Howard Mims while singing in Hampton's choir, and they were engaged in 1952. The Mims' married in 1953, after which Howard Mims was drafted into the U.S. Army. After Mims ended his military service, the two moved to Cleveland, Ohio so that he could pursue his Master's Degree at Case Western Reserve University. At this time, Grace Mims worked at the Cleveland Public Library and pursued her Master's Degree in library science at Case Western Reserve University. Mims was hired as the Head Librarian at Glenville High School in 1963, where served for over a decade. Mims shares some insight into her civic involvement in Cleveland, Ohio and reflects upon her husband's legacy.

African American grandfathers.

Snow Hill Normal and Industrial Institute (Ala.).

Tuskegee Institute.

Edwards, William James, 1869-1950.

Hampton Institute.

United States--Armed Forces--African Americans.

Case Western Reserve University.

Cleveland Music School Settlement.

Video Oral History Interview with A. Grace Lee Mims, Section A2014_071_001_004, TRT: 4:29:04 ?

A. Grace Lee Mims describes her experiences as a vocalist with the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus. Mims performed as a soprano with this professionally trained, all-volunteer chorus through the 1960s. Mims left her position as Head Librarian at Glenville High School in Cleveland, Ohio in 1973 to perform full-time as a vocalist with her family's band, The Descendants of Mike and Phoebe. The group toured from 1973-1983, and released A Spirit Speaks in 1974. In 1976, Mims pitched the idea of "The Black Arts" radio show to Cleveland's WCLV-FM classical music station. Centered on highlighting African Americans' contributions to classical music, "The Black Arts" continues to air today. Mims performed as a soprano for both the Fairmount Presbyterian Church and the William Appling Singers. Mims talks about her nephews, filmmakers Spike Lee and Malcom D. Lee. Mims concludes the tape by reflecting upon the state of Cleveland's arts community, contemporary musical culture, and her philosophies on teaching and music.

Cleveland Orchestra. Chorus.

African American singers.

WCLV (Radio station : Cleveland, Ohio)--Radio programs

Lee, Spike.

Lee, Malcolm D., 1970-

William Appling Singers & Orchestra.

Art and community--Ohio--Cleveland.

Video Oral History Interview with A. Grace Lee Mims, Section A2014_071_001_005, TRT: 5:36:48 ?

A. Grace Lee Mims reflects upon her career, legacy, and hopes and concerns for the African American community. Mims considers her influence on the future of classically-trained musical artists with the A. Grace Lee Mims Vocal Scholarship. This \$10,000 annual scholarship was begun in 2010 with the Cleveland Foundation, for graduate students in Ohio working towards degrees in music performance or music education in order to preserve Negro Spiritual singing. Mims talks about the life and legacy of her late husband Howard A. Mims, and the influence of the cultural center at Cleveland State University that was named in his honor.

Cleveland Foundation--Learning and Scholarship.

Cleveland State University.

Spirituals (Songs)--Study and teaching.

Video Oral History Interview with A. Grace Lee Mims, Section A2014_071_Mims_AGrace_06_MED_001_01, TRT: 0:23:02

Video Oral History Interview with A. Grace Lee Mims, Section A2014_071_Mims_AGrace_06_MED_001_02, TRT: 0:25:37