Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com

Creator: Gates, Yvonne Atkinson, 1956-

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Yvonne Atkinson Gates,

Dates: September 25, 2016

Bulk Dates: 2016

Physical Description: 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:25:14).

Abstract: Political leader Yvonne Atkinson Gates (1956 - ) represented District D on the Clark County Board of Commissioners, where she was the first African American woman to serve as chair. Gates was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 25, 2016, in Denver, Colorado. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

Identification: A2016_061

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Political leader Yvonne Atkinson Gates was born on June 10, 1956 in Henderson, Nevada to Bobbie Davis Atkinson and Eddie Atkinson. Gates graduated from Ed W. Clark High School in Las Vegas and went on to earn her B.S. degree in political science and journalism in 1979, her M.P.A. degree in 1982, and her Ph.D. degree in public administration in 2012, all from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Following her graduation from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Gates
Yvonne Atkinson Gates was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on September 25, 2016.
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:

Gates, Yvonne Atkinson, 1956-
Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)
Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:
African Americans--Interviews
Gates, Yvonne Atkinson, 1956---Interviews

**Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

**Occupations:**

County Commissioner

**HistoryMakers® Category:**

PoliticalMakers

**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**


**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


Yvonne Atkinson Gates was born on June 10, 1956 in Henderson, Nevada to Bobbie Davis Atkinson and Eddie Atkinson. Her father was born in 1919 in Warren, Arkansas. He served in the U.S. military during World War II, and then became a brick mason. He eventually moved west to Las Vegas, Nevada, where he met Gates’ mother, who was also from Warren. Gates’ maternal grandfather, George Davis, worked in the timber industry in Warren, while her grandmother, Pearl Davis, was a homemaker. In the 1950s, they moved to Las Vegas, where he became a custodian at Ronzoni’s department store. Gates was the second oldest of five children, and grew up in the predominantly black Westside of Las Vegas. She began her education at Wendell P. Williams Elementary School, and then attended Ed W. Clark High School, where she joined the student council and the track and basketball teams. Her mother worked as a casino waitress, while her father was a construction worker and custodian.


Yvonne Atkinson Gates received a journalism scholarship to attend the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV).
There, she took courses in political science, and became a founding member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority chapter. Her classmates included the UNLV Runnin’ Rebels basketball stars, Reggie Theus and Ricky Sobers. Aspiring to a career as an elected official, Gates campaigned locally for Assemblyman Cranford Crawford and Clark County Commissioner Woodrow Wilson. Upon graduating in 1979, she joined the City of Las Vegas’ budget and finance department. Gates went on to obtain a master’s degree in public administration from UNLV in 1982. Then, she began her career in the government of Clark County, Nevada, where she worked in planning, human resources and social services. Around this time, Gates became the youngest and only minority member of the Clark County Board of School Trustees. In this role, she helped secure educational funding for the county’s African American community.


Yvonne Atkinson Gates served on the Clark County Board of School Trustees in Clark County, Nevada from 1985 to 1992. She was then elected to a seat on the Clark County Board of Commissioners, where she represented the two hundred thousand constituents of District D. As a commissioner, Gates advocated for the creation of early childhood education centers, and collaborated with Nevada’s congressional representatives, including Shelley Berkley and Harry Reid. She also developed technical knowledge about issues that impacted the Las Vegas Strip, such as water access. She and her fellow commissioners were responsible for authorizing permits and licenses for the city’s hotels, resorts and casinos. Although many of the commissioners were involved in business ventures, Gates was targeted for an ethics investigation when she tried to open a restaurant franchise. In recognition of her public service, the Clark County Board of School Trustees opened the Yvonne Atkinson Gates Center in 1996.


Yvonne Atkinson Gates was elected to represent District D on the Clark County Board of Commissioners in Clark
Yvonne Atkinson Gates was the first African American woman to serve as chairperson of the Clark County Board of Commissioners. In 2008, she was appointed by Senator Harry Reid to serve as a Democratic National Committee superdelegate for Hillary Clinton. She eventually switched her allegiance to Barack Obama, who went on to become the first African American president of the United States. At this point, Gates talks about superdelegate reform, and the movement to legalize marijuana. Gates completed her Ph.D. degree at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and then moved with her husband, Lee Gates, to Boulder, Colorado, where their youngest daughter completed high school. At the time of the interview in 2016, Gates supported Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign, and aspired to join her administration. Gates describes her plans for the future, and her hopes and concerns for the African American community. She concludes the interview by reflecting upon her legacy and how she would like to be remembered.