

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Harriet Elam-Thomas

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Elam-Thomas, Harriet Lee, 1941-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Harriet Elam-Thomas,
Dates:	September 8, 2018
Bulk Dates:	2018
Physical Description:	11 uncompressed MOV digital video files (4:59:13).
Abstract:	Ambassador Harriet Elam-Thomas (1941 -) was U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Senegal and was the first ambassador-in-residence at the University of Central Florida. Elam-Thomas was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 8, 2018, in Orlando, Florida. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2018_177
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Ambassador Harriet Elam-Thomas was born on September 15, 1941 in Boston, Massachusetts to Robert and Blanche Elam. She attended William P. Boardman Elementary School and graduated from Roxbury Memorial High School for Girls in Boston, Massachusetts. Elam-Thomas went on to receive her B.S. degree in international business in 1963 from Simmons College in Boston, Massachusetts, and her M.A. degree in public diplomacy in 1981 from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts.

From 1963 to 1965, Elam-Thomas worked as a secretary at the U.S. Department of Army in Washington, D.C.; and later in 1965, she worked at the American embassy in Paris, France, where she served for three years. Elam-Thomas returned to the U.S. in 1968 and secured a position in the White House as special assistant for appointments under President Richard Nixon. In 1971, she resigned from her position in the Nixon administration and was hired at the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs as a Foreign Service officer in Washington, D.C. In 1975, she was sent to Dakar, Senegal. From 1977 to 1979, Elam-Thomas served as a Foreign Service officer in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. In 1981, she was selected to serve in Athens, Greece as a cultural affairs officer. Within one year, she was sent to Athens where she worked from 1983 to 1987. Elam-Thomas transitioned to the position of desk officer in Turkey, Greece and Cyprus. In 1990, she was assigned to Turkey as the U.S. branch public affairs officer, then Elam-Thomas returned to the U.S. in 1994 and was accepted into the U.S. State Department's Senior Seminar, a year-long intensive program on foreign policy and diplomacy. In 1995, she was named public affairs officer in Brussels, Belgium where she served for two years. She then became a counselor at the United States Information Agency (USIA) and oversaw the merger with the U.S. Department of State. In 1999, Elam-Thomas was selected by President Bill Clinton to become U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Senegal, and served from 2000 to 2003. She later became the first ambassador-in-residence at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, Florida. In 2005, Elam-Thomas retired from U.S. Foreign Service at the rank of career minister.

Elam-Thomas has received multiple awards and honors for her work. She received the Superior and Meritorious Honor Award for Informational and Cultural Diplomacy and the Greek and Turkish Governments' Award for improved U.S. cultural relations. She also holds honorary doctorate degrees in public service from Simmons College and the University of Central Florida, an honorary doctorate of law from Richmond College and The American University in London, and an honorary doctorate in public administration from Suffolk University.

Elam-Thomas is married to Wilfred Thomas.

Harriet Elam-Thomas was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on September 9, 2018.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Harriet Elam-Thomas was conducted by Larry Crowe on September 8, 2018, in Orlando, Florida, and was recorded on 11 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Ambassador Harriet Elam-Thomas (1941 -) was U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Senegal and was the first ambassador-in-residence at the University of Central Florida.

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:

Elam-Thomas, Harriet Lee, 1941-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Elam-Thomas, Harriet Lee, 1941- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Foreign Ambassador

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

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Harriet Elam-Thomas, September 8, 2018. 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 Harriet Elam-Thomas, Section A2018_177_001_001, TRT: 1:27:58 ?

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Harriet Elam-Thomas, Section A2018_177_001_002, TRT: 2:27:11 ?

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Harriet Elam-Thomas, Section A2018_177_001_003, TRT: 3:27:34 ?

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Harriet Elam-Thomas, Section A2018_177_001_004, TRT: 4:29:05 ?

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Harriet Elam-Thomas, Section A2018_177_001_005, TRT: 5:30:55 ?

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Harriet Elam-Thomas, Section A2018_177_001_006, TRT: 6:28:09 ?

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Harriet Elam-Thomas, Section A2018_177_001_007, TRT: 7:28:46 ?

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Harriet Elam-Thomas, Section A2018_177_001_008, TRT: 8:28:24 ?

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Harriet Elam-Thomas, Section A2018_177_001_009, TRT: 9:27:52 ?

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Harriet Elam-Thomas, Section A2018_177_001_010, TRT: 10:28:40 ?

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Harriet Elam-Thomas, Section A2018_177_001_011, TRT: 11:14:39 ?