

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Willie T. Barrow

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Barrow, Willie T. (Willie Taplin), 1924-2015
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Willie T. Barrow,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 19, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:53:14).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Civil rights activist Reverend Willie T. Barrow (1924 - 2015 ) was a field organizer for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and a founding member of Operation Breadbasket in Chicago, Illinois. Barrow was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 19, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A1999_001
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civil rights activist Reverend Willie T. Barrow was born on December 7, 1924 to Octavia and Nelson Taplin, a minister. Barrow was raised in Burton, Texas, where as a student she led a demonstration of rural African American schoolchildren against a segregated school system. Barrow later attended Warner-Pacific Theological Seminary in Portland, Oregon, and helped build a church in that city in the 1940s.

Upon graduation, Barrow was ordained as a minister and began her career as both a spiritual and social activist. From 1953 to 1965, she was a field organizer for Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, where she was responsible for the organization of transportation, shelter, meetings and rallies for demonstrations, including the 1965 March on Selma, Alabama. During the 1960s, Barrow was among the founding members of Operation Breadbasket in Chicago, Illinois, a program that provided spiritual guidance and practical assistance to communities in need. Later, in 1968, she led a three-person delegation to North Vietnam and participated in the negotiation of the Vietnam Peace Treaty.

Barrow went on to serve as co-chair of the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, the organization that grew out of Operation Breadbasket. At the Coalition, she coordinated activities and served as an aide to Reverend Jesse Jackson, Sr. Barrow also served as associate minister of the Vernon Park Church of God in Chicago, and was active in the National Urban League and National Council of Negro Women.

Barrow was honored with a Doctor of Divinity degree from Monrovia, Liberia and a Leadership Certificate from Harvard University. She also received awards from the League of Black Women, the Christian Women's Conference, and the Indo-American Democratic Organization. In September of 1997, a street on Chicago's South Side was renamed in her honor; and, that same year, the Reverend Willie Barrow Wellness Center was opened to bring affordable and accessible health care to needed areas in Chicago. She authored the book, *How to Get Married and Stay Married*, which was published in 2004.

Reverend Barrow passed away on March 12, 2015 at the age of 90.

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# Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reverend Willie T. Barrow was conducted by Adele Hodge on August 19, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civil rights activist Reverend Willie T. Barrow (1924 - 2015 ) was a field organizer for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and a founding member of Operation Breadbasket in Chicago, Illinois.

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# 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®.

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# 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.

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# Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

## Persons:

Barrow, Willie T. (Willie Taplin), 1924-2015

Hodge, Adele (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Barrow, Willie T. (Willie Taplin), 1924-2015--Interviews

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African American religious leaders--Interviews.

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African American civic leaders--Interviews.

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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Rainbow/PUSH Coalition

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## Occupations:

Civil Rights Activist

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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## 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 Reverend Willie T. Barrow, August 19, 2002. 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

## Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Willie T. Barrow, Section A1999\_001\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:47 ?

Rev. Willie Barrow opens this segment with some autobiographical information on her family. She mentions how her evangelist father and mother stressed the importance of family and upholding the family name. Because she traveled with her father, Barrow decided to enter the seminary, but didn't have money to continue in college. A guardian angel supported her education, which she supplemented with a job welding ships during WWII. The segment closes with her recollection of her fighting the racism in Texas when she was a high school student.

African American families.

Evangelicalism.

Theological seminaries.

Education.

Racism--Texas.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Willie T. Barrow, Section A1999\_001\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:50 ?

Willie Barrow recounts a few stories from her one-room schoolhouse high school years, in particular the segregated school bus tale. She continues with her fortuitous transition to the seminary, courtesy of a great-aunt. Barrow jumps ahead to her philosophy on human interaction in a post "9/11" world. The pain of losing a majority of her family, including both sons, her parents and husband, has left her scarred but not bowed. Barrow jumps back to her civil rights days of marching with Martin Luther King in Selma and the great obstacles they faced. She continues with recollections of the training and her observations of events during that volatile period.

Education, Primary.

King, Martin Luther Jr., 1929-1968.

African American families.

Death and remembrance.

Selma to Montgomery Rights March (1965 : Selma, Ala.).

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Willie T. Barrow, Section A1999\_001\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:52 ?

Willie Barrow shares many of the insider details of life as a young civil rights worker. In describing the difficulties faced in Selma, Montgomery or right here in Chicago, she returns to her philosophy of standing up for what is right even in the face of insurmountable odds. She applies that same philosophy to the business world, as she describes boycotting companies lacking a visible black presence in the executive office. Barrow details the origins of Operation BREADBASKET and Operation PUSH. As a woman minister, Barrow has experienced gender discrimination within the church and she details some of those incidents. But she also talks about how she faced that discrimination head-on and won. The segment closes with Barrow's recounting of how Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. asked her to work with Rev. Jesse Jackson and how they have worked together ever since then.

Civil rights movements--United States.

Selma to Montgomery Rights March (1965 : Selma, Ala.).

Operation PUSH (U.S.).

Women clergy.

Jackson, Jesse, 1941-

King, Martin Luther Jr., 1929-1968.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Willie T. Barrow, Section A1999\_001\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:50 ?

Willie Barrow delves into the unique challenges she's faced as a player in the Civil Rights Movement, particularly as a board member in Operation PUSH/Operation Breadbasket. She remembers the rise of the coalition which brought Chicago Mayor Harold Washington to power. Barrow also discusses the importance of forming coalitions. At the time of the interview, Barrow was very hopeful about the outcome of the 2002 election.

Civil rights movements--United States.

Operation PUSH (U.S.).

Washington, Harold, 1922-1987.

Community organization.

Elections--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Willie T. Barrow, Section A1999\_001\_001\_005, TRT: 0:30:48 ?

Willie Barrow discusses her nearly 40 years of involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. She assesses the progress of black America and ponders its future. Barrow stresses the need for education, unity of purpose and creating more "Willie Barrows" -- people who will take a stand on important issues. Barrow also ponders the Slavery Reparations movement, but casts it as part of a larger spiritual movement. In final reflections, she wants her legacy to be that of a woman who was 'committed to her people.' The segment closes with several photos.

Civil rights movements--United States.

Leadership.

African Americans--Social conditions--United States.

Reparations for historical injustices.

Photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Willie T. Barrow, Section A1999\_001\_001\_006, TRT: 0:19:07 ?

Barrow narrates her personal photographs as they are recorded on videotape.

Photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Willie T. Barrow, Section A1999\_001\_REV\_WILLIE\_T\_BARROW\_06\_MED\_002, TRT:

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Willie T. Barrow, Section A1999\_001\_REV\_WILLIE\_T\_BARROW\_06\_MED\_003, TRT: