

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Carrie P. Meek

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Meek, Carrie P., 1926-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Carrie P. Meek,
Dates:	June 19, 2001
Bulk Dates:	2001
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:31:41).
Abstract:	U.S. congresswoman The Honorable Carrie P. Meek (1926 - 2021) was the first African American elected to represent Florida in the U.S. Congress since Reconstruction. Successfully focusing her attention on issues such as economic development, health care, education and housing, Meek led legislation through Congress to improve Dade County's transit system, airport and seaport; construct a new family and childcare center in North Dade County; and fund advanced aviation training programs at Miami-Dade Community College. Meek was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 19, 2001, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2001_049
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Former Congresswoman Carrie Meek was born on April 29, 1926, in Tallahassee, Florida. The granddaughter of a slave and the daughter of former sharecroppers, she spent her childhood in segregated Tallahassee. Meek graduated from Florida A&M University in 1946. At this time, African Americans could not attend graduate school in Florida, so Meek traveled north to continue her studies and graduated from the University of Michigan with an M.S. in 1948.

After graduation, Meek was hired as a teacher at Bethune Cookman College in Daytona Beach, Florida, and then at her alma matter, Florida A&M University. Meek moved to Miami in 1961 to serve as special assistant to the vice president of Miami-Dade Community College. The school was desegregated in 1963 and Meek played a central role in pushing for integration. Throughout her years as an educator, Meek was also active in community projects in the Miami area.

Elected as a Florida state representative in 1979, Meek was the first African American female elected to the Florida State Senate in 1982. As a state senator, Meek served on the Education Appropriations Subcommittee. Her efforts in the legislature also led to the construction of thousands of affordable rental housing units.

In 1992, Meek was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Florida's 17th Congressional District. This made her the first black lawmaker elected to represent Florida in Congress since Reconstruction. Upon taking office, Meek faced the task of helping her district recover from Hurricane Andrew's devastation. Her efforts helped to provide \$100 million in federal assistance to rebuild Dade County. Successfully focusing her attention on issues

such as economic development, health care, education and housing, Meek led legislation through Congress to improve Dade County's transit system, airport and seaport; construct a new family and childcare center in North Dade County; and fund advanced aviation training programs at Miami-Dade Community College. Meek has also emerged as a strong advocate for senior citizens and Haitian immigrants.

Meek has received numerous awards and honors. She is the recipient of honorary doctor of laws degrees from the University of Miami, Florida A&M University, Barry University, Florida Atlantic University and Rollins University. Meek was a member of the powerful House Appropriations Committee, in addition to serving on the Subcommittee on Treasury, Postal Service and General Government and the Subcommittee on VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies.

Meek passed away on November 28, 2021.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Carrie P. Meek was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on June 19, 2001, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. U.S. congresswoman The Honorable Carrie P. Meek (1926 - 2021) was the first African American elected to represent Florida in the U.S. Congress since Reconstruction. Successfully focusing her attention on issues such as economic development, health care, education and housing, Meek led legislation through Congress to improve Dade County's transit system, airport and seaport; construct a new family and childcare center in North Dade County; and fund advanced aviation training programs at Miami-Dade Community College.

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:

Meek, Carrie P., 1926-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Meek, Carrie P., 1926---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Florida

Occupations:

U.S. Congresswoman

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 Carrie P. Meek, June 19, 2001. 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 Carrie P. Meek, Section A2001_049_001_001, TRT: 0:29:41 ?

Carrie Meek's unquenchable desire for justice and equality began in her earliest years. As one of twelve children, the granddaughter of resilient ex-slaves, and daughter of a hardworking sharecropper and housekeeper, Meek noticed racial injustice at a tender age. Her older siblings had to walk six miles to school, and they were all forced to use the cast-off books of white children and chew their pencils to sharpen them, as sharpeners weren't provided for black students. Meek describes her childhood as particularly warm and close, despite the difficult financial circumstances her parents faced. She describes her family lovingly and details her parents' strong survival traits. Meek also details the particular difficulties of growing up in a very segregated Florida in the 1930s and 1940s and the pitfalls this segregated life posed for her brothers. She also describes her good fortune in being educated in Florida A&M University's laboratory school and the opportunities it provided for her.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Carrie P. Meek, Section A2001_049_001_002, TRT: 0:29:15 ?

Carrie Meek delves into her secondary school and post-secondary school experiences in this segment. She describes a host of influential teachers, professors and noted local figures who encouraged her to pursue a higher education. Meek describes the overwhelming pervasiveness of segregation in Florida at that time, which included denying black students admission to state universities. She mentions a friend who fought the state for decades to be admitted to the University of Florida Law School, and was awarded a degree posthumously. The segment closes with her recollection of graduating from Florida A&M University, then accepting her first teaching position at Bethune-Cookman College.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Carrie P. Meek, Section A2001_049_001_003, TRT: 0:31:07 ?

Carrie Meek reflects upon the difficult years in this segment. She describes the wrenching choice of divorcing her husband and trying to raise two small children on a meager salary. Meek returned to her mother's home in Tallahassee to save money and found herself more involved in community activities. She recalls her graduate school experience at the University of Michigan and her recruitment by Bethune-Cookman College and later, Miami-Dade Community College. She describes the influence of noted educator, Mary McLeod Bethune, on her life and career. Meek also mentions several other noted educators whose paths she crossed.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Carrie P. Meek, Section A2001_049_001_004, TRT: 0:30:44 ?

Carrie Meek describes how the unexpected set of circumstances and the death of her mentor, Gwen Cherry, led her to run for Cherry's U.S. Congressional seat.

Meek faced an unsupportive Florida Democratic Party, which nominated a man to run for the seat. She found a groundswell of support from her former students who were now well-established members of the community. Meek also credits Athalie Range for her support and instruction in running for office. Although she has achieved great success as a congresswoman, Meek laments that her dedication to her constituents and job cost her two marriages. The segment closes with Meek's assessment of her efforts and achievements with her Haitian American constituents.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Carrie P. Meek, Section A2001_049_001_005, TRT: 0:30:54 ?

In summing up her life and career, the 2000 Presidential election was the most devastating event Meek has experienced as a citizen and politician. She describes the multitude of violations committed by the Florida Republican Party. As Meek nears her late seventies, she is reflective. She still has the desire to be an agent of change and wants to help improve the quality of life for her constituents. Meek contemplates what her grandmother and mother would think of her political achievements, and now she ponders what her son will do once she steps down from her congressional seat. Meek hopes to leave a legacy as a woman who "strove for her people".