

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Blanche Manning

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Manning, Blanche Marie, 1934-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Blanche Manning,
Dates:	March 26, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:13:20).
Abstract:	Federal district court judge The Honorable Blanche Manning (1934 - 2020) was the first African American woman to serve on the Illinois Appellate Court. In 1994, President Bill Clinton appointed Manning as district court judge for the Northern District of Illinois. Manning was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 26, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_055
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

The appointment of Blanche M. Manning as United States District Court judge marks a momentous moment in Illinois history. Born December 12, 1934, in Chicago, Manning discovered her passion for law while working as a legal secretary to finance a bachelor's degree in education at DePaul University. She taught in Chicago public schools before pursuing a J.D. at John Marshall Law School. A jazz musician and enthusiast, Manning also studied music at Roosevelt University. She earned a master's of the laws of judicial process from the University of Virginia Law School.

In 1968, Manning began an exemplary legal career as assistant prosecutor in the Cook County State's Attorney's Office. She subsequently worked as an attorney for the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, United Airlines and the United States Attorney's Office. Manning was promoted to judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County in 1979. When she was elected to the Illinois Appellate Court in 1987, she became the first African American female member of that court. Accepting an appointment by President Bill Clinton, Manning began a lifetime position as district court jurist for the Northern District of Illinois in 1994. Her role in high-profile cases is chronicled in newspapers and books. Manning, who has contributed to workshops at the University of Chicago and Harvard law schools, served as adjunct professor of law at DePaul University College of Law. She is a fellow of the American Bar Association.

Manning has played in numerous jazz bands, and she regularly assembles her own band, Diversity, composed of musicians of diverse backgrounds. She has been involved in community development, and she received a "We Care" Role Model Award from Chicago police and public schools for ten consecutive years. Manning and her husband, William, whom she married in 1957, raised six nieces and nephews.

Manning passed away on September 20, 2020.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Blanche Manning was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 26, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Federal district court judge The Honorable Blanche Manning (1934 - 2020) was the first African American woman to serve on the Illinois Appellate Court. In 1994, President Bill Clinton appointed Manning as district court judge for the Northern District of Illinois.

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:

Manning, Blanche Marie, 1934-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Manning, Blanche Marie, 1934---Interviews

African American lawyers.

African American judges.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States. District Court (Illinois : Northern District)

Occupations:

Federal District Court Judge

HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers

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 Blanche Manning, March 26, 2003. 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 Blanche Manning, Section
A2003_055_001_001, TRT: 0:29:14 ?

Blanche Manning describes her family background. Her mother, Marguerite Anderson, was born in 1911 in Whitehaven, Tennessee and orphaned at a young age. Her father, Julius Porter, was born and raised in Memphis, Tennessee. After marrying in Memphis, the couple moved to Chicago, Illinois, and gave birth to Blanche Manning on December 12, 1934. Manning grew up in a gang-infested area of Chicago's South Side, and later moved to the West Chesterfield neighborhood. As a girl, Manning enjoyed school and reading; her favorite book was "Little Women." In 1951, Manning enrolled at Fenger High School, where she played the clarinet in the school band and orchestra. She also played saxophone with a local group of jazz musicians. Manning aspired to become a musician, and enrolled at Roosevelt University's Chicago Musical College in 1955. At her father's urging, she quit in 1957 and began working, eventually graduating from Chicago State University around 1961 with her B.S. degree in education.

Education & culture.

African American neighborhoods--Illinois.

African American families--Illinois--Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Blanche Manning, Section
A2003_055_001_002, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Blanche Manning was inspired to pursue a legal career by Thurgood Marshall, and by working as a legal secretary. In 1961, she enrolled at John Marshall Law School, and began working as an elementary school teacher. John Marshall Law School promoted a rigorous, yet inclusive culture that Manning enjoyed. In 1964, Manning and her husband became guardians to five of their nieces and nephews, forcing her to take a hiatus from law school. Manning later re-enrolled at John Marshall Law School, and graduated from here with her J.D. degree in 1967. In 1968, Manning was hired to work as an assistant prosecutor in the predominantly white Illinois State Attorney's Office under Edward Hanrahan. At one point, Manning was pressured to seek the death penalty for a case she was prosecuting, yet she refused, and the defendant was instead sentenced to 200 to 300 years in prison. Manning later learned that the defendant was innocent. Manning also described the challenges prosecutors face, and commented on the death penalty.

African American families--Illinois--Chicago.

Marshall, Thurgood, 1908-1993.

John Marshall Law School (Chicago, Illinois)

Marriage and Family Life.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Blanche Manning, Section
A2003_055_001_003, TRT: 0:27:55 ?

In 1968, Blanche Manning was hired as a prosecutor with the Illinois State Attorney's Office, where she described the work as fair and somewhat autonomous. She excelled in this position, as was asked to serve on the defense team of an individual that she had originally prosecuted. In 1973, Manning went on to serve as a supervisory trial lawyer for the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), where she prosecuted major corporations for employment discrimination. She left the EEOC to work briefly as a labor lawyer for United Airlines, and then accepted a position with the Office of the United

States Attorney in 1978. In 1979, Manning was selected as an Associate Cook County Circuit Court Judge. In 1986, she was elected as a Judge on the Cook County Circuit Court. A few months later, Mayor Harold Washington appointed Manning as the first African American woman to serve as a judge on the Illinois Appellate Court. She ran for this seat in 1988, and retained this position until 1994.

Illinois. Office of the State's Attorneys Appellate Prosecutor.

United States. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Discrimination--Law and legislation.

Judges--Illinois--Chicago.

Elections--Illinois--1970-1980.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Blanche Manning, Section A2003_055_001_004, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Blanche Manning was elected to a 10-year term as a Judge on the Illinois Appellate Court in 1987. However, Manning resigned from her position in 1994, when she was appointed to serve as a United States District Court Judge by President William "Bill" Clinton. In this capacity, Manning tried the largest price fixing case in the nation's history. She also tried a number of drug cases, as well as mob cases. Manning talked about the "Operation Greylord" scandal, as well as how a candidate for the federal judgeship might fail an FBI background check. In 1995, Manning was sent a bomb from an individual she sentenced to prison; U.S. Marshalls detonated the bomb before it exploded. Manning talked about professional organizations she is involved in, including the Illinois Judicial Council, which she co-founded in 1982. Manning also described her hopes and concerns for the black community, and commented on the perception of judges in popular culture.

Law enforcement--Illinois.

United States. District Court (Illinois : Northern District)

Judges--Selection and appointment.

Judges--Workload--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Blanche Manning, Section A2003_055_001_005, TRT: 0:16:51 ?

Blanche Manning described the work ethic she inherited from her parents Julius and Marguerite Porter. In 1987, Manning began playing jazz music after a decades-long hiatus. She taught herself how to play the bass clarinet, and began taking lessons to improve her saxophone skills at the Bloom School of Jazz in Chicago, Illinois. Manning helped form the Chicago Bar Association Symphony Orchestra. She also helped form the Barristers' Big Band, another group made up of members of the Chicago Bar Association, and the Scales of Justice, a combination band made up of musicians from the Barristers' Big Band. Manning has also played with the Chicago State University Concert Band and an all-women's band called the KCR Ensemble. Manning has also played at popular venues like the Hot House and Andy's Jazz Show Club. Manning talks about her legacy, how she would like to be remembered, and closes the tape by narrating her photographs.

African American families--Illinois--Chicago.

Jazz musicians.

Mentoring.