

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Jerline Lambert

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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>	Lambert, Jerline, 1938-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Jerline Lambert,
<b>Dates:</b>	April 21, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:19:51).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Real estate broker Jerline Lambert (1938 - ) is the first African American woman certified as a real estate manager, and later became a certified real estate appraiser. Lambert was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 21, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_086
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Jerline Lambert was born in West Helena, Arkansas, on July 16, 1938, and was adopted when she was ten months old. While her early education was in Arkansas, Lambert finished her education in Chicago, earning an A.A. from Central YMCA and a B.A. from Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago in 1989. Lambert has also received a variety of other certifications, including a certified real estate appraiser license from Howard University and a certified real estate manager license from the University of Chicago.

Lambert first began in real estate in 1965, when she went to work as a sales representative for Well's Realty in Chicago. In 1968, she became a real estate broker and opened up Lambert's Realty, serving as president and CEO. Lambert took classes and became the first African American woman certified real estate manager. Since then, her business has grown to include real estate appraisals and property management, incorporating a staff of fifteen, including four of Lambert's children.

In recent years, Lambert was appointed by the National Association of Realtors to work as district coordinator for Illinois Congressman Danny Davis, bringing to his attention various housing related issues throughout his district. She has also been involved in a number of community organizations and has been the recipient of numerous awards. She was appointed by former Illinois Governor Jim Edgar to serve as a member of the Governor's Commission of Mortgage Practices; is president emeritus of the Chicago Chapter of Africare; and the first vice president of the Midwest Community Council. Lambert has also served on the national board of Operation PUSH. Lambert has appeared in *Who's Who In American Women*, has been the recipient of the Rainbow/PUSH Women in Business Achievement Award and has received the Midwest Community Council Lifetime Award for Distinguished Community Service.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Jerline Lambert was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on April 21, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Real estate broker Jerline Lambert (1938 - ) is the first African American woman certified as a real estate manager, and later became a certified real estate appraiser.

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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:

Lambert, Jerline, 1938-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Lambert, Jerline, 1938---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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## Occupations:

Real Estate Broker

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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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 Jerline Lambert, April 21, 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).

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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 Jerline Lambert, Section A2003\_086\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:46 ?  
Jerline Lambert narrates her photographs, then describes her upbringing. Lambert was born on June 16, 1938 to Florina Sanders and Lawrence Clemmons in Round Pond, Arkansas. Lambert was adopted by Mack and Annie Goins, and barely knew her mother, who died in 1941. Mack Goins, a retired professor, taught Lambert black history. He also owned a cotton farm. Annie Goins, a retired schoolteacher, was a devoted Baptist, and often invited churchgoers to her home to try to convert her husband. The sights, smells, and sounds of Lambert's childhood include watching hog killings, smelling fruit orchards and hearing trains. Lambert's earliest memory is of studying. Lambert started first grade at the Rosenwald School at five years of age, where she was inspired by

her teacher, Ms. Sederi. After the Rosenwald School closed in 1949, Lambert was bussed to Lincoln High School in Forrest City, Arkansas. She married Charles Lambert in 1952, when she was fourteen and he was twenty. She got pregnant and left school to pick cotton.

Video Oral History Interview with Jerline Lambert, Section A2003\_086\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:16 ?

In 1952, Jerline Lambert dropped out of high school to marry Charles Lambert. In 1956, the couple and their family moved to Chicago, where they lived on the gang-infested West Side with a close network of family friends from the South. Lambert worked as a domestic in suburban Chicago. Lambert became fed up with domestic work and began working in a Christmas tree factory, where her employer encouraged her to complete high school. Lambert enrolled at Wells High School in 1960, and then transferred to Jones Commercial High School to study office protocol. Lambert eventually took the GED test and received her high school diploma. In 1963, the Lamberts purchased their first home under contract, motivating Lambert to enter the real estate business. Lambert enrolled in real estate school, and later passed her real estate exam. She soon worked as a real estate agent. The Lamberts were later let out of their home contract after they were prevented from renting their basement apartment, and they began leasing a home.

Video Oral History Interview with Jerline Lambert, Section A2003\_086\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:42 ?

In 1967, Jerline Lambert joined Operation Breadbasket. Lambert began working as a real estate broker in the mid-1960s, training under the men who sold her the first home, the Bass Brothers. She and later trained under a real estate agent named Geraldine Wells. Wells and an agent named Michael Willis taught Lambert how to put deals together, close deals, network, and “blockbust,” or solicit sales. Lambert’s husband did not support her, leading the couple to divorce. In 1968, Lambert opened Lambert’s Realty, and began managing properties to earn extra income. By 1969, Lambert managed nearly 30 properties on Chicago’s West Side. Many of these properties were owned by whites who left the area during white flight. In 1968, the Fair Housing Act enabled blacks to mortgage their homes, rather than purchase them on contract, directly benefitting Lambert’s Realty. Lambert also lowered the overhead costs of managing properties by employing family and friends; however, she faced financial challenges in the early 1970s.

Video Oral History Interview with Jerline Lambert, Section A2003\_086\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:57 ?

In 1971, Jerline Lambert became the first certified African American female real estate manager under a realists’ group. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, blacks were prevented from becoming realtors, so they branded themselves “realists”. Lambert maintained business interests on Chicago’s West and South Sides, and was a member of the Dearborn Real Estate Board, where Oscar Brown, Sr. and Ripley Mead mentored her. Lambert was also acquainted with HistoryMakers Dempsey Travis and Elzie Higginbottom. Lambert sold HistoryMaker and U.S. Congressman Danny K. Davis his first home, and supported him politically. In the 1970s, Lambert faced challenges due to the increasing mortgage moratoriums. This motivated her to begin appraising real estate in 1979. Lambert was appointed by Governors Jim Edgar and Dan Walker to serve on various committees. Lambert went out of her way to mentor young girls and her clients. She also talked about her children’s involvement in her business and her work ethic

Video Oral History Interview with Jerline Lambert, Section A2003\_086\_001\_005, TRT: 0:18:10 ?

Jerline Lambert earned her A.A. degree from Central YMCA Community College, and her B.S. degree from Northeastern Illinois University in 1989.

Lambert described the real estate profession, noting that it remains lucrative. However, real estate brokers must be willing to commit a tremendous amount of time to the industry to succeed. Each of Lambert's five children worked for Lambert's Realty, and four remain in the business. They have maintained a successful family business because they get along. Lambert is happy that many condemned buildings in Chicago's neighborhoods have been destroyed, but she worries about drug activity in these areas. Lambert fears that African Americans are being priced out of Chicago's housing market. In addition, she worries that many struggle to transition from public or rented housing to homeownership. Lambert described what it takes to be a good property manager, and the legal aspects of property management. Lambert also talked about her adoptive parents, Mack and Annie Goins.