

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Ruth A. Davis

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Davis, Ruth A., 1943-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Ruth A. Davis,
Dates:	March 2, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:17:55).
Abstract:	Foreign ambassador The Honorable Ruth A. Davis (1943 -) was the first African American female career ambassador and has served in Zaire, Kenya, Japan, Italy and Spain. Davis was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 2, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_011
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Ambassador Ruth A. Davis was born on May 28, 1943 in Phoenix, Arizona to parents Anderson and Edith Davis. She attended E.R. Carter and E.C. Clements Elementary Schools in Atlanta, Georgia, where she grew up. Davis graduated from Booker T. Washington High School in 1962. A cross-country family vacation as a child was an epiphany and changed her life, convincing her that she wanted to travel and see the world.

From 1962 to 1966, Davis attended Spelman College in Atlanta where she earned her bachelor's degree in sociology and graduated magna cum laude. While attending Spelman, she spent fifteen months studying and traveling in Europe and the Middle East as a Merrill Scholar. In 1968, Davis received her master's degree from the School of Social Work at the University of California at Berkeley.

Davis is the first African American female career ambassador. She joined the Foreign Service in 1969 and was assigned as Consular Officer in Kinshasa, Zaire until 1971. She also served in Nairobi, Kenya from 1971 to 1973, Tokyo, Japan from 1973 to 1976 and Naples, Italy from 1976 to 1980. After completing her assignment in Italy she returned to the United States working as Special Advisor for International Affairs for the Washington, D.C. Government. Finally, in 1992, Davis reached the height of her profession when she was appointed Ambassador to the Republic of Benin. She served in that post until 1996.

Ambassador Davis is credited with playing a significant role in the organization of the 1992 Barcelona Olympic games and in Atlanta's successful bid for the 1996 games. She is the recipient of several prestigious awards including a Presidential Distinguished Service Award in 1999 and again in 2002. In 2003, Davis was awarded The Secretary's Distinguished Award by Secretary of State Colin Powell. She served as director general of the Foreign Service and director of human resources from 2001 to 2003. It was here she developed the "School of Leadership and Management," one of her proudest accomplishments. Davis is committed to diversifying the Foreign Service by recruiting potential diplomats at the college level.

Ambassador Davis is single and resides in Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Ruth A. Davis was conducted by Racine Tucker Hamilton on March 2, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Foreign ambassador The Honorable Ruth A. Davis (1943 -) was the first African American female career ambassador and has served in Zaire, Kenya, Japan, Italy and Spain.

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:

Davis, Ruth A., 1943-

Hamilton, Racine Tucker (Interviewer)

Lane, Edgar Carey (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Davis, Ruth A., 1943---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

United States. Dept. of State

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 Ruth A. Davis, March 2, 2004. 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 Ruth A. Davis, Section A2004_011_001_001, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

U.S. Ambassador Ruth Davis begins by detailing her family background,

sharing stories that describe her mother and her father. Davis recalls her ancestors, explaining how her grandparents lived hard, yet fulfilling lives in South Carolina. She also shares memories from her childhood in Atlanta, including a cross-country road trip that made a lasting impression on her young mind.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Ruth A. Davis, Section A2004_011_001_002, TRT: 0:31:09 ?

U.S. Ambassador Ruth Davis discusses her close personal bond with her younger sister and details her formal education from elementary through high school. Davis recalls influential teachers from her school years, discusses her favorite subjects and activities, and explains her reluctance to help integrate Atlanta area schools while she was a student. She also explains why she was born in Phoenix, Arizona, and ended up moving to Atlanta.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Ruth A. Davis, Section A2004_011_001_003, TRT: 0:30:29 ?

U.S. Ambassador Ruth Davis remembers her years as an undergraduate student at Spelman College, where she first became involved in social activism, and as a graduate student at the University of California at Berkeley, where she earned a master's in social work. After a discussion about the impact of the Civil Rights Movement on global politics, Davis recounts her early experiences with the U.S. State Department, including her travels to Africa, Italy and Japan, and tells why she decided to become a career ambassador.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Ruth A. Davis, Section A2004_011_001_004, TRT: 0:27:54 ?

U.S. Ambassador Ruth Davis continues to discuss her career with the U.S. State Department. She recalls defying racism to succeed as Consul General to Spain, which led her to earn her ambassadorship in the early 1990s. She then details her ambassadorship to Benin and her work as Director General of the Foreign Service Institute in Washington, D.C. She concludes by discussing the lack of minorities in the Foreign Service, and reflects on her life and career.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Ruth A. Davis, Section A2004_011_001_005, TRT: 0:17:53 ?

U.S. Ambassador Ruth Davis narrates her personal photographs as they are recorded on videotape.