

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Maureen Forte

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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>	Forte, Maureen, 1950-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Maureen Forte,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 27, 2004
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2004
<b>Physical Description:</b>	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:49:19).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Elementary school teacher and radio host Maureen Forte (1950 - ) was a teacher at the Sawyer Elementary School in Chicago, and former delegate of the Chicago Teachers Union. She was also the host of N' the Know with Moe on WCFJ Radio in Chicago. Forte was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 27, 2004, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2004_150
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Teacher and radio personality Maureen Forte was born in Chicago, Illinois on October 1, 1950. Her parents, Georgia Ann Jones and Willis Jones, grew up in West Virginia and later relocated to Chicago. After graduating from Englewood High School in Chicago, Forte attended Chicago State University, earning her bachelor's degree in education in 1974.

Forte began her teaching career at St. Thaddeus in Chicago, where she taught for ten years following her graduation from Chicago State University. During this time, Forte began her involvement in a number of organizations, and served as a delegate for the Chicago Teachers Union for ten years. In 1989, she began teaching at the Sawyer Elementary School in Chicago. She has also become highly active in the NAACP and the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition. She founded the South Suburban chapter of Rainbow/PUSH in 1990 and has continued to raise the bar for social commitment in the area. Since founding the branch, Forte served as president until stepping down in 2004.

Forte served as the vice-president of the South Suburban NAACP and hosted her own radio talk show, *N' the Know with Moe*, which is broadcast on WCFJ-AM on Sunday afternoons. She is also a member of the Legislative and Women's Rights Committees of the Chicago Teachers Union. On May 9, 2007, Forte became the first Black female village trustee of East Hazel Crest, Illinois, and on May 18, 2007, she became a delegate of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

Forte was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 27, 2004.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Maureen Forte was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 27, 2004, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Elementary school teacher and radio host Maureen Forte (1950 - ) was a teacher at the Sawyer Elementary School in Chicago, and former delegate of the Chicago Teachers Union. She was also the host of N' the Know with Moe on WCFJ Radio in Chicago.

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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:

Forte, Maureen, 1950-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Forte, Maureen, 1950---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:

Radio Host

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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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 Maureen Forte, August 27, 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).

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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 Maureen Forte, Section A2004\_150\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:50 ?

Maureen Forte was born on October 1, 1950 in Chicago, Illinois. She talks about her family history. Her mother, Georgia Ann Jones (nee Knowles), was born on in Welsh, West Virginia in 1919. Her father, Willis Jones Sr., was born in 1909 in West Virginia. Forte's mother was a housewife and a stay-at-home mom. Her father worked several jobs to support their family of six. Most notably, he was a coal miner in West Virginia, from which he contracted black lung disease. Several of Forte's siblings also have health problems due to coal dust exposure. Her father's first cousin was HistoryMaker Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth, a prominent civil rights leader. Forte talks about growing up in the Altgeld Gardens public housing project in the Park Manor neighborhood of Chicago,

Illinois with her three older siblings: Mary, Millie, and Willis. She also describes her childhood personality and her grade school years. In Chicago, Forte attended McCosh Elementary School and Englewood High School.

Video Oral History Interview with Maureen Forte, Section A2004\_150\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:20 ?

Maureen Forte describes her experience at Englewood High School in Chicago, Illinois where she encountered racist bullying during her freshman year. After graduating, Forte attended Chicago State University where she earned a B.A. degree in education. As an undergraduate, Forte took drama courses at Kennedy-King College in Chicago, which granted Forte a position performing in Cole Porter's 'Paint Your Wagon' with the USO (United Service Organization) in Seoul, Korea in 1971. After graduating from Chicago State in 1974, Forte worked as a schoolteacher for many years. Her experiences as a student, teacher, and community activist, as well as the targeted violence against blacks occurring around the country in the 1960s, propelled Forte to become more politically involved in the fight for equality. She became the vice president of the south suburban chapter of the NAACP in Chicago, and also started her own chapter of Rainbow/PUSH. Forte worked with Keith Anderson to advocate on behalf the "Decatur Seven" in 1999.

Video Oral History Interview with Maureen Forte, Section A2004\_150\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:20 ?

Maureen Forte examines the different treatment between white and black students in Chicago, Illinois' public school system within the context of the "Decatur Seven." Forte worked with Rainbow/PUSH to expose zero-tolerance policies in schools unfairly targeting minority students. After producing HistoryMaker Reverend Jesse Jackson's radio program for over three years, Forte began her own radio talk show: "'N the Know with Moe." The show covered many issues including racism, police brutality, death row inmates, white flight, and politics. During her show's Father's Day segment titled 'The Cries of Men in Prison,' Forte interviewed Martin Reeves, a member of the "Death Row Ten." Forte talks about her work with the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, and gentrification in the south suburbs of Chicago. In 1993, Forte ran for Illinois State Representative against Frank Zuccarelli, whose budget surpassed her own. She lost by nine votes. Forte talks about the importance of voting and voter education.

Video Oral History Interview with Maureen Forte, Section A2004\_150\_001\_004, TRT: 0:23:49 ?

Maureen Forte resigned from her position as president of the Rainbow/PUSH (People United to Serve Humanity) in 1994 after seven years. At the time of her interview, Forte hoped to run for a trustee position in the East Hazel Crest community in order to continue serving in that area. She describes her hopes for the African American community, her divorce, and her two daughters. Forte also reflects upon her legacy and how she would like to be remembered. She concludes the tape by narrating her photographs.