

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Naomi Jean Gray

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Gray, Naomi T., 1922-2006
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Naomi Jean Gray,
Dates:	March 31, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:59:34).
Abstract:	Healthcare executive and nonprofit chief executive Naomi Jean Gray (1922 - 2007) was a cofounder of the Sojourner Truth Foster Family Service Agency. Gray was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 31, 2005, in San Francisco, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_090
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Naomi Jean Gray was born Naomi Jean Thomas on May 18, 1922, in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Graduating from Crispus Attucks High School in Indianapolis, Indiana, Gray earned her B.S. degree in sociology from Hampton University in 1945, and three years later, earned her M.S. degree from Indiana University in Indianapolis.

A caseworker in the Foster Care Agency in Indianapolis from 1948 to 1949, Gray joined the Planned Parenthood Federation of America a year later. During her twenty years with Planned Parenthood, Gray established and directed seven regional offices throughout the United States and developed guidelines for community education and organizational programs. Gray became the first woman to serve as vice president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America and as a social work instructor at San Francisco State University. Honored as an Indiana Distinguished Citizen, and cited for her work by the National Association for Sickle Cell Disease, Gray also founded and served as president of the Urban Institute for American Affairs. A cofounder and executive director of the Sojourner Truth Foster Family Service Agency, Gray also worked as a consultant for several health and family planning groups.

A member of many community organizations, including the National Urban League, the National Conference on Social Welfare, the California State Planning Commission on Minority Business Enterprises, and the San Francisco Health Commission, Grey also served as a member of the African American Child Task Force, the NAACP, and the San Francisco Black Chamber of Commerce. As cofounder of the African American Education Leadership Group, Gray worked to establish an academic elementary school in a predominately African American community in San Francisco. Gray also served on Mayor Willie Brown's Task Force on Children, Youth, and Their Families from 1990 to 1993.

Gray passed away on December 29, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Naomi Jean Gray was conducted by Loretta Henry on March 31, 2005, in San Francisco, California, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Healthcare executive and nonprofit chief executive Naomi Jean Gray (1922 - 2007) was a cofounder of the Sojourner Truth Foster Family Service Agency.

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:

Gray, Naomi T., 1922-2006

Henry, Loretta (Interviewer)

Stenson, Foster (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Gray, Naomi T., 1922-2006--Interviews

African American educators--Interviews

African American social workers--Interviews

African American women civic leaders--Interviews

Nonprofit organizations--Employees--United States--Interviews

Human services personnel--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

Occupations:

Nonprofit Chief Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Naomi Jean Gray, March 31, 2005. 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 Naomi Jean Gray, Section A2005_090_001_001, TRT: 0:30:04
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Naomi Jean Gray was born on May 18, 1922 to Rosa Henry Thomas and Simon Thomas. Her mother, a hairdresser, was born in Mississippi, and her father was born in Summit County, Alabama. Her parents met while her father was preaching in Mississippi. The Ku Klux Klan forced the family to flee to Tennessee after Gray's father advocated for equal education. Gray's family then moved to Indianapolis, Indiana. Gray's older sister, Willa Thomas, was a missionary and created host homes for international students in Indianapolis. Her brother, Edward Thomas, was a Meharry Medical College-educated doctor who worked in a private practice in Indianapolis. Her sister Doris Thomas attended Hampton Institute with Gray, then continued at Howard University Law School where she studied under Thurgood Marshall. She later worked for Senator Phillip Burton in California. Her youngest sister, Ruth Thomas, had four daughters whom Gray helped raise. One daughter was an aide to San Francisco's first black supervisor Terry Francois.

African American educators--Interviews.

African American social workers--Interviews.

African American women civic leaders--Interviews.

Nonprofit organizations--Employees--United States--Interviews.

Human services personnel--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Naomi Jean Gray, Section A2005_090_001_002, TRT: 0:30:41
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Naomi Jean Gray reflects upon her father, Simon Thomas', response to the racism he faced. Gray graduated from the all-black Crispus Attucks High School in segregated Indianapolis in 1946. She attended Talladega College in Alabama for one year before transferring to Hampton Institute in Virginia where she felt more comfortable around less wealthy students and learned African American history from Professor Higginbotham. While attending Indiana University Division of Social Services, she did field work in Chicago. She moved to New York City where she worked with National Planned Parenthood and frequently lived with migrant workers to educate them on family planning. While advocating for birth control, she met Malcolm X. She traveled with Minnie Gaston, Carlton B. Goodlett, and HistoryMakers Ossie Davis and Dorothy Height to meet with members of the Congressional Black Caucus to advocate for family planning. She recalls integrating hotels during her travels through the segregated South.

Video Oral History Interview with Naomi Jean Gray, Section A2005_090_001_003, TRT: 0:29:28
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Naomi Jean Gray remembers seeing Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. speak at a conference in San Francisco. When attendees heard about a plane crash, many mistakenly feared Thurgood Marshall had died. During her eighteen years at Planned Parenthood, Gray garnered financial support from Stewart Mott and the actress Patricia Neal. For her outreach efforts to Native American communities, Gray created a program where young men educated their peers about parenthood. Gray was fired from her position, but Aileen Hernandez and Carlton B. Goodlett helped reinstate her. She resigned to found Naomi Gray

Associates, a consulting firm. Gray was elected to the San Francisco health commission and served on the budget committee. As health commissioner, she worked with Glide Memorial pastor Cecil Williams, J. Alfred Smith, Sr. and others to address the AIDS epidemic in minority communities. Gray also created programs to treat sickle cell anemia with Charles F. Whitten, and argued against bussing in San Francisco schools.

Video Oral History Interview with Naomi Jean Gray, Section A2005_090_001_004, TRT: 0:29:21
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Naomi Jean Gray volunteered for a variety of organizations, and worked on HistoryMaker Reverend Jesse L. Jackson's first presidential campaign at the request of HistoryMaker Barbara Lee. She also worked under San Francisco mayors Frank Jordan and HistoryMaker Willie L. Brown to revitalize the Fillmore Jazz District in San Francisco. Although Gray campaigned to legalize medical cannabis, she worried the lack of regulation in San Francisco would force the federal authorities to shut down the city's cannabis clubs. Gray co-founded Sojourner Truth Foster Family Service Agency. She recalls one case where she helped a homeless teenager receive a full scholarship to college. Gray also reflects upon her role as a mentor, her life and her values. She describes her concerns for the African American community and how she would like to be remembered, and concludes the tape by narrating her photographs.