

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Georgia Dickens

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Dickens, Georgia, 1920-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Georgia Dickens,
Dates:	June 21, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:58:41).
Abstract:	Community volunteer and elementary school teacher Georgia Dickens (1920 - 2017) worked in the Atlanta Public School System for forty-three years, retiring in 1982. In addition to her activities as an educator, Dickens won numerous awards for her volunteerism. Dickens was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 21, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_141
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Retired educator and community volunteer Georgia Nelle Smith Dickens, nicknamed Gee Gee, was born on December 24, 1920, in Atlanta, Georgia. Both of Dickens's parents, Reverend Harvey Miles Smith and Stella Bryant Smith, were college educated individuals who graduated from Morehouse College and Atlanta University respectively. Dickens's parents instilled in her a sense of responsibility, respect for self, and a passion for education. Dickens was raised in Atlanta, Georgia, attending E.R. Carter Elementary School; she went on to attend Madison High School where she graduated in 1937, at the age of fifteen, as the class salutatorian. In 1938, Dickens enrolled in Spelman College where she was voted Miss Personality by her peers; she graduated in 1942.

Dickens started her career as an educator in 1942 in Albany, Georgia; that same year, she married Morehouse College graduate Robert D. Dickens. Dickens moved back to Atlanta and began teaching at Young Street Elementary School, where she enjoyed working with children. While teaching, Dickens volunteered for the Children's Alliance Theater Guild; she also chaired the United Negro College Fund Telethon and co-chaired the Volunteers Telephone Committee and the Democratic National Convention. After working in the Atlanta Public School System for forty-three years, she retired from teaching in 1982.

Dickens won several awards for her achievements and volunteerism; she was honored as an outstanding volunteer by the United Negro College Fund Telethon. In 1989 Dickens was presented with the President's Award by the Atlanta Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., *Essence* magazine's Ambassador Award; in 2001 she was awarded the Alumnae Achievement Award in Civic Service by Spelman College; in 2003 she won the National Visionary Leadership Award.

Dickens and her husband raised one son.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Georgia Dickens was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 21, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Community volunteer and elementary school teacher Georgia Dickens (1920 - 2017) worked in the Atlanta Public School System for forty-three years, retiring in 1982. In addition to her activities as an educator, Dickens won numerous awards for her volunteerism.

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:

Dickens, Georgia, 1920-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Dickens, Georgia, 1920---Interviews

African American women teachers--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews

Community activists--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews

Youth workers--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Atlanta Public School System

Occupations:

Elementary School Teacher

HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

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 Georgia Dickens, June 21, 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 Georgia Dickens, Section A2005_141_001_001, TRT: 0:28:00 ?

Georgia Dickens was born on December 24, 1920 in Atlanta, Georgia to Stella Bryant Smith and Harvey Miles Smith. Her mother's family was from West Point, Georgia and her mother studied to become a teacher at Spelman College. Her father, the son of a Baptist preacher, attended Morehouse College. He was close friends with Martin Luther King, Sr. Dickens' father preached at different churches in the South, including Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Albany, Georgia, where Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. held meetings during the Albany Movement. The family moved back to Atlanta in 1945 after Dickens' father fell ill. Dickens was the oldest of four siblings, which included HistoryMaker Dr. Harvey Smith. An active child, she inherited her father's tendency to take charge. She remembers the smell of the woods and falling in a stream as a child. Dickens took dancing and swimming lessons. While attending Spelman College, she sang in glee club and choir with teachers Willis Laurence James and Kemper Harreld.

African American women teachers--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews.

Community activists--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews.

Youth workers--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Georgia Dickens, Section A2005_141_001_002, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Georgia Dickens' maternal grandfather, Henry Bryant, built many of the houses in Atlanta, Georgia in the 1920s. Dickens attended E.R. Carter Elementary School before transferring to Chadwick School. Her childhood neighbors included W.E.B. Du Bois, HistoryMaker Dr. Asa Yancey, Sr. and Dr. Benjamin Mays, and she learned French from HistoryMaker Mercer Cook. Growing up, Dickens' grandmother taught her the value of volunteerism. Dickens moved to Albany, Georgia, where her father founded Mount Zion Baptist Church. While there, Dickens attended Madison High School, graduating as salutatorian at age sixteen. Dickens attended Georgia Normal and Agricultural College in Albany for a year before transferring to Spelman College in 1938. At Spelman, Dickens joined the English and dance clubs and was known for her outgoing personality. Dickens married Morehouse graduate Robert D. Dickens. Her son, Robert D. Dickens, Jr., was born in 1943. In 1945, Dickens started her teaching career at Young Street Elementary School.

Video Oral History Interview with Georgia Dickens, Section A2005_141_001_003, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Georgia Dickens taught humanities and arts classes at Atlanta's segregated Young Street Elementary School where the classes were overcrowded. Realizing that one of her students was Benny Andrews' niece, Dickens invited him to give an art lesson to her class. Dickens' popular school arts programs were attended by Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s mother, Alberta King, and her father, Adam Daniel Williams. Since Dickens' father was a friend of Martin Luther King, Sr., Dickens grew up with King and his sister, HistoryMaker Christine King Farris. She describes King's personality and his civil rights efforts with HistoryMaker Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker. As an art coordinator, Dickens organized programs at three schools in Atlanta. Dickens worked on HistoryMaker John Lewis' 1977 congressional campaign. In 1979, Dickens became a member of the Alliance Children's Theatre Guild. After retiring in 1982, Dickens devoted her time to volunteer work at Gate City Day Nursery Association and Woodruff Arts Center.

Video Oral History Interview with Georgia Dickens, Section A2005_141_001_004, TRT: 0:31:01 ?

Georgia Dickens recalls her parents telling her about a race riot they lived

through in her childhood neighborhood in Atlanta, Georgia in 1906. Dickens was friends with HistoryMaker Julian Bond and worked on his congressional campaign. She also volunteered for HistoryMaker John Lewis' congressional campaign. Since its inception in 1987, Dickens has been involved in the National Black Arts Festival, which was co-founded by Michael Lomax and HistoryMaker Stephanie Hughley. Dickens describes her hopes and concerns for the African America community and her family. She shares her thoughts about the social changes she has witnessed at Spelman College, and her thoughts about the way social etiquette has changed in her lifetime. Dickens concludes the interview by reflecting upon her legacy, her life and how she would like to be remembered.