

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Reynolds, Barbara A.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds,
Dates:	June 30, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:43:48).
Abstract:	Author, media company chief executive, and newspaper columnist Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds (1942 -) wrote for the Chicago Tribune and USA Today. She also authored a biography of Reverend Jesse Jackson: <i>Jesse Jackson, America's David</i> . Reynolds was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 30, 2005, in Suitland, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_156
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Award-winning journalist, author, and minister, Barbara Ann Reynolds, was born on August 17, 1942, in Columbus, Ohio. Raised by her step grandmother, Mae Stewart, Reynolds attended St. Cyprian Catholic School, Franklin Junior High School, and graduated from Columbus East High School in 1960. Starting at Central State University, Reynolds graduated from Ohio State University (OSU) with her B.A. degree in journalism in 1967. At OSU, Reynolds wrote for *The Lantern* and the *Columbus Call and Post*.

Employed as a social worker in Cleveland, Reynolds was hired by the *Cleveland Press* in 1968, where she covered the race riots. Hired by *Ebony* magazine in 1969, Reynolds became assistant editor and wrote the monthly food column, *A Date with a Dish*. A poet, Reynolds was published in *Black World* and was associated with Kuumba Theatre and the OBAC Writers Workshop. In 1969, Reynolds joined *Chicago Today* where she covered the murder of Fred Hampton; that same year, she moved to the *Chicago Tribune*, where she helped found *Dollars and Sense* magazine. In 1975, Reynolds wrote the controversial biography, *Jesse Jackson, the man, the myth and the movement*, which was revised ten years later as *Jesse Jackson, America's David*. Reynolds was awarded a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard University in 1976. Reynolds served as Washington correspondent for the Chicago Tribune until 1980 and wrote a regular column for *USA Today* until 1996. Reynolds hosted a radio talk show called *Barbara's Beat* and was host of WHUT's *Evening Exchange*. Reynolds penned *No, I Won't Shut Up: 30 Years of Telling It Like It Is* with a foreword by Coretta Scott King in 1998, and the autobiographical, *Out of Hell and Living Well* in 2005. In addition to these activities, Reynolds was founder and president of Reynolds News Service.

Attracted to spirituality, Reynolds attended Howard University Divinity School in 1988, graduating in 1992. Reynolds was ordained as a minister in 1993 after a spiritual experience at the Door of No Return in Senegal, then earned her D. Min. from United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, in 1997. Reynolds served as a minister at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. and was founder of Harriet's Children, an organization that

assisted women who abused alcohol and drugs.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 30, 2005, in Suitland, Maryland, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Author, media company chief executive, and newspaper columnist Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds (1942 -) wrote for the Chicago Tribune and USA Today. She also authored a biography of Reverend Jesse Jackson: Jesse Jackson, America's David.

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:

Reynolds, Barbara A.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Reynolds, Barbara A.--Interviews

African American women authors--Interviews

African American journalists--Interviews

African American women clergy--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Newspaper Columnist

Author

Media Company Chief Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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 Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds, June 30, 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 Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds, Section A2005_156_001_001, TRT: 0:29:12 ?

Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds was born August 17, 1942 in Columbus, Ohio. Her mother, Elizabeth Henderson, left Reynolds when she was two years old to move to California. Reynold's father, Harvey Reynolds, was born in Pulaski, Tennessee in 1918. His grandfather, Smith Reynolds, fought in the Civil War, and his family were sharecroppers who were eventually chased out of Tennessee by the Klu Klux Klan to Alabama. Her father's sister, Ida Alexander, settled in Columbus then returned to Alabama and persuaded several family members to leave with her. Alexander was a surrogate mother to Reynolds. Reynolds was raised mostly by her maternal grandfather, Milton Stewart, a messenger at a bank, and her step-grandmother, Mae Stewart, who worked as a maid in Bexley, Ohio and inspired Reynolds with her strength and wisdom. Reynolds' parents both remarried and had children. Early in her life, Reynolds recognized her desire to become a writer and see a book with her name on it.

African American women authors--Interviews.

African American journalists--Interviews.

African American women clergy--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds, Section A2005_156_001_002, TRT: 0:29:33 ?

Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds grew up in Columbus, Ohio next door to a house where frequent sex parties occurred. In her diary she wrote stories about what she saw next door and about her grandparents' roomers and her father fondling her. When her grandmother found this diary, Reynolds was improperly diagnosed as mentally ill and committed to a mental institution. This traumatic incident left Reynolds unable to write for many years. The local drugstore owner mentored her and took her to visit The Ohio State University. After attending St. Cyprian School, she transferred to Franklin Junior High School. At East High School, she joined the band and drama club, but also cut classes and began drinking. For being drunk at school, Reynolds was barred from walking at her graduation. She entered college to appease her grandmother, but her first semester at Central State College in Columbus resulted in failing grades. She left to live with her estranged mother in California, but soon returned to Columbus.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds, Section A2005_156_001_003, TRT: 0:30:45 ?

Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds returned home to Ohio after being rejected by her mother. Reynolds decided to attend The Ohio State University. After the 1965 Voting Rights Act was passed, she traveled to Tennessee to encourage voter registration. She realized she wanted to be a journalist, but was immediately discouraged by the university administration, who informed her that a black female journalist would never succeed. Amos Lynch, the editor of the African American paper Call & Post in Cleveland, Ohio, mentored Reynolds. Several newspapers rejected her because she was a black woman. Eventually, she was hired by the Cleveland Press. As their police beat reporter, she covered riots and went undercover at a nursing home. After a short-lived marriage, Reynolds left the Cleveland Press and returned to Columbus, Ohio,

where she met HistoryMaker Lerone Bennett who forwarded her work onto HistoryMaker John H. Johnson. Johnson hired Reynolds, and she moved to Chicago, Illinois.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds, Section A2005_156_001_004, TRT: 0:30:01 ?

Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds was inspired by the courage of civil rights protesters. She compares the overt racism she saw in the South with the more subtle racism in the North. In 1970, Reynolds began working for Johnson Publication as an assistant editor at Ebony magazine. Reynolds was disturbed by the trend of her male colleagues hunting big game in Africa, the lack of female colleagues, and lack of opportunity at the magazine. She wrote a poem published in Negro Digest and became an Organization of Black American Culture poet. In 1969, she became the first African American journalist at Chicago Today, where the segregated environment meant she was assigned mostly crime stories that did not reflect the wide range of African American experience. She covered Black Panther Party leader Fred Hampton's assassination in 1969. Reynolds joined the Chicago Tribune when it absorbed Chicago Today and co-founded Dollars & Sense Magazine with Donald C. Walker.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds, Section A2005_156_001_005, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds was the primary reporter on Fred Hampton's assassination. The press's complicity with the Chicago Police Department in hiding the truth of his death made Reynolds distrust the justice system. In 1974, Reynolds co-founded Dollars & Sense magazine with Donald C. Walker to cover news about successful African American business people. While reporting on HistoryMaker Reverend Jesse L. Jackson's work and foundations, Reynolds became friends with him. She was approached by a publisher to write Jackson's biography. As she began to write, she discovered several lies and financial irregularities. She wrestled with the idea that her reporting could harm a hero in the community. However, Reynolds decided that she had to write the truth, otherwise she could not be a journalist. After publishing 'Jesse Jackson, the Man, the Movement, the Myth,' she was shunned by members of Chicago society and received death threats, although HistoryMaker Vernon Jarrett and Ethel Payne came to her defense.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds, Section A2005_156_001_006, TRT: 0:30:09 ?

Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds' book 'Jesse Jackson: the Man, the Movement, the Myth' was published in 1975. Following this publication, she was a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts on the recommendation of HistoryMaker John H. Johnson. When she returned to the Chicago Tribune, she was promoted and became the first female African American Washington, D.C. correspondent. While working in D.C., she met repeated abuse from her white male colleagues. Her story on HistoryMaker Dick Gregory's meeting with Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini during the hostage crisis was buried in the newspaper due to the Tribune's reluctance to credit an African American man, and Reynolds left the Tribune. She was hired by John Seigenthaler as an editor for 'USA Today,' forming their op-ed page. However, as management changed, Reynolds was asked to write more conservatively to appeal to white suburban readers. In 1996, her column was taken away from her. This set her on a new path towards the seminary.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds, Section A2005_156_001_007, TRT: 0:28:58 ?

Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds became interested in Christianity when she was diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver. One night after drinking, she had a vision of going to hell, which led her to attend church regularly. She became an active member in Bishop Alfred A. Owens Jr.'s Evangel Cathedral in Upper Marlboro, Maryland when she moved to Washington, D.C. While an editor at USA Today, she began to explore faith and people's religious experiences in her journalistic writings. She received her master's degree from Howard University School of Divinity in D.C. Before being ordained as a minister, Reynolds knew she had to stop drinking. She traveled to Senegal and visited Gorée Island, where slave ships had embarked for America. Moved by this historically significant site, Reynolds quit drinking and was ordained when she returned. She earned her doctorate of ministry from the United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio and founded Harriet's Children, a ministry dedicated to helping women battling addiction.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Barbara Reynolds, Section A2005_156_001_008, TRT: 0:15:40 ?

Revered Dr. Barbara Reynolds adopted her son, John Eric Reynolds, in 1983. He motivated her to quit drinking in order to be a better parent. Reynolds, a single mother, found a surrogate family with Janie Jackson and her daughter, Norlishia Jackson. Reynolds and the Jacksons shared a home as they raised their children together in Washington, D.C. and Prince George's County, Maryland. In describing her concerns for the African American community, Reynolds notes the problems wrought by drug addiction and HIV/AIDS. She concludes the interview by reflecting upon her life, legacy and how she would like be remembered.