

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Juliet Dobbs Blackburn-Beamon

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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>	Blackburn-Beamon, Juliet Dobbs, 1937-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Juliet Dobbs Blackburn-Beamon,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 1, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:56:36).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Educator Juliet Dobbs Blackburn-Beamon (1937 - ) was the founding director of the Dobbs Foundation for Arts and Humanities Education, and an educator that taught at an assortment of universities in the New York and Atlanta areas. Blackburn-Beamon was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 1, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_177
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Educator Juliet Dobbs Blackburn-Beamon, founding director of Dobbs Foundation for the Arts and Humanities Education and Clark Atlanta University Humanities professor, was born on October 3, 1937, in Atlanta, Georgia, to Benjamin Allan Blackburn, and Willie Juliet Dobbs Blackburn. Blackburn-Beamon's maternal grandfather, John Wesley Dobbs, was an early leader in Atlanta's African American community who played a significant role in the development of the Sweet Auburn business district. Blackburn-Beamon's parents raised her, along with her younger brother Benjamin Allan Jr., in Jackson, Mississippi, where they worked as educators.

Blackburn-Beamon's father was a teacher and principal in Jackson's public schools and her mother taught at what was then Jackson College for Negro Teachers, now Jackson State University. Blackburn-Beamon received her preschool and elementary school education in the practice schools on Jackson College's campus. After eighth grade, Blackburn-Beamon attended Tougaloo College Preparatory High School, and, after the eleventh grade, became an early entrant into Tougaloo College. Blackburn-Beamon entered Spelman College as a sophomore in 1955, at the age of eighteen. Blackburn-Beamon graduated from Spelman College in 1958 and went on to receive her M.S. degree in applied art from New York University in 1959.

Though eventually she returned to academia and was awarded a Ph.D. in humanities from Clark Atlanta University, for the next period of her life Blackburn-Beamon worked in the commercial and government arenas. Blackburn-Beamon was an assistant buyer at Alexander's from 1961 to 1962 and moved on to Lane Bryant in 1963 to become a buyer in women's sportswear. In 1966, Blackburn-Beamon began to teach salesmanship and junior management with the Manpower program for State of New York Department of Labor. At Bronx Community College and Kingsboro College, Blackburn-Beamon taught marketing. From 1968 to 1971, Blackburn-Beamon lived and worked in the Bahamas developing training programs with British American Life Insurance Company. Blackburn-Beamon returned to New York City in 1971 to train for a position in upper management at Sears

Roebuck; her work for Sears brought her to Atlanta, where her cousin, Maynard Jackson, was serving his first term as mayor. In Atlanta, Blackburn-Beamon transferred to a job marketing a line of black hair care products called LeConté. In 1977, Blackburn-Beamon went to Sierra Leone to work for the United States Government Department of State's Agency in Development, (AID); upon her return that same year, she began working at Atlanta's Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit (MARTA). In 1979, Blackburn-Beamon married African American architect LaFayette Beamon.

In 1996, Blackburn-Beamon received her doctorate and took a position as professor and chairperson of the Art and Architectural Studies Department at Morris Brown, also teaching at Spelman and Clark Atlanta. Blackburn-Beamon served as director of the John W. Dobbs Foundation for Arts and Humanities Education and on the board of Atlanta's Center for Puppetry Arts. In addition to her professional activities, Blackburn-Beamon was also heavily active in various philanthropic pursuits in the Atlanta area. Blackburn-Beamon received the Leadership Atlanta Award in 1994, and the Collections of Life and Heritage Museum's Support Awards in 1985 and 1990, among numerous other awards and honors throughout her career.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Juliet Dobbs Blackburn-Beamon was conducted by Paul Brock on August 1, 2005, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Educator Juliet Dobbs Blackburn-Beamon (1937 - ) was the founding director of the Dobbs Foundation for Arts and Humanities Education, and an educator that taught at an assortment of universities in the New York and Atlanta areas.

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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:

Blackburn-Beamon, Juliet Dobbs, 1937-

Brock, Paul (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Blackburn-Beamon, Juliet Dobbs, 1937- --Interviews

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African American women college teachers--Interviews

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Endowments--Officials and employees--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:

Educator

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

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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 Juliet Dobbs Blackburn-Beamon, August 1, 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).

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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 Juliet Dobbs Blackburn-Beamon, Section A2005\_177\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:04 ?

Juliet Dobbs Blackburn-Beamon was born on October 3, 1937 in Atlanta, Georgia. Her mother, Willie Juliet Dobbs Blackburn, was born on January 12, 1910 in Atlanta, Georgia. Her maternal great-great grandmother's father was a white man named Dr. McAfee. Her maternal great-grandmother, Minnie Millie Minerva Hendricks Dobbs married Wesley Dobbs, the son of Will and Judy Dobbs from Kennesaw, Georgia. Her maternal grandfather, John Wesley Dobbs, married Irene Thompson Dobbs whose father was Kelly Thompson. John Wesley Dobbs was born in Kennesaw, Georgia and moved to Savannah, Georgia at age seven to live with his mother who worked as a seamstress. He attended the all-black Scarborough school where he studied elocution which helped to develop his oratory skills. John Wesley Dobbs attended Morehouse Seminary for high school, worked as a railway mail clerk, and was Grand Mason of the Prince Hall Masons of Georgia.

African American women college teachers--Interviews.

Endowments--Officials and employees--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Juliet Dobbs Blackburn-Beamon, Section A2005\_177\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:06 ?

Juliet Dobbs Blackburn-Beamon describes her maternal grandparents. Her grandmother, Millie Minerva Hendricks Dobbs, was born the child of a house slave and the plantation owner and remembered leaving the plantation wearing a pink outfit after Emancipation. Millie then married Wes Dobbs and they had two children. Wes Dobbs left the family to look for work and started another family in Alabama. Blackburn Beamon's maternal grandfather, John Wesley Dobbs, attended Morehouse Seminary, worked as a delivery boy for a pharmacist, and became a railway mail clerk working his way up to supervisor, a position rarely held by black men. Dobbs married Irene Thompson Dobbs in 1906 and had six daughters, all of whom graduated from Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. Blackburn-Beamon's great-aunt was a certified teacher in the mid-1860s or 1870s. Blackburn-Beamon shares memories of visiting her grandmother during the summer and staying in their large home.

Video Oral History Interview with Juliet Dobbs Blackburn-Beamon, Section A2005\_177\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:16 ?

Juliet Dobbs Blackburn-Beamon describes her mother, Willie Dobbs Blackburn, who was a child during the devastating 1917 fire in Atlanta, Georgia. She describes her maternal aunts, including HistoryMaker Mattiwilda Dobbs Janzon. Blackburn-Beamon's father, Benjamin Blackburn, was born on July 27, 1906 in Port Gibson, Mississippi to William Webster Blackburn and Sarah Jennings Blackburn. Her great-grandmother was a Creek Indian who rode into Port

Gibson on a horse. William Blackburn graduated from Natchez College in Natchez, Mississippi and worked as a teacher, principal, and school administrator for the black State Teachers Association. Blackburn-Beamon's father attended Farish Street Baptist Church in Jackson and graduated from Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia in 1928 where he played football and was a member of the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity. Her father then attended The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio but returned to Jackson before completing his degree to become an elementary school principal.

Video Oral History Interview with Juliet Dobbs Blackburn-Beamon, Section A2005\_177\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:34 ?

Juliet Dobbs Blackburn-Beamon talks about her mother's decision to give birth to her in Atlanta, Georgia due to the lack of black hospitals in Jackson, Mississippi. Blackburn-Beamon remembers being stung by a bee while growing up in Jackson, Mississippi. She attended nursery school at Jackson College where she disliked naps and carrots. Her parents were introduced by her paternal grandfather when her mother attended Jackson College for Negro Teachers. Blackburn-Beamon talks about her cousins including Maynard Jackson who became Mayor of Atlanta, Georgia. Blackburn-Beamon attended Tougaloo College Preparatory High School where she received a scholarship to attend Tougaloo College but she had to attend Spelman College in Atlanta due to the Dobbs' family tradition. At Spelman, she remembers her peers giving her a birthday party in the dorm. Blackburn-Beamon graduated from Spelman College in 1958 with a B.A. degree in art and went on to receive her M.S. degree in applied art from New York University in 1959.

Video Oral History Interview with Juliet Dobbs Blackburn-Beamon, Section A2005\_177\_001\_005, TRT: 0:28:26 ?

Juliet Dobbs Blackburn-Beamon talks about searching for a career in the arts. Blackburn-Beamon describes the racism they experienced in New York City in 1960 when she and her cousin were initially turned down for an apartment and when she was refused an internship at Saks Fifth Avenue. Blackburn-Beamon recalls how the State of Mississippi gave black students scholarships to study out of state. After securing an internship at Bloomingdales, she became an assistant buyer at Alexander's from 1961 to 1962 before moving on to Lane Bryant in 1963 to become a buyer in women's sportswear. She met Lawrence R. Houston while attending New York University in New York City, New York, and the couple married in 1962. In 1966, Blackburn-Beamon began to teach salesmanship and junior management with the Manpower program for the State of New York Department of Labor. At Bronx Community College and Triborough College, Blackburn-Beamon taught marketing. In 1968, she and Houston divorced.

Video Oral History Interview with Juliet Dobbs Blackburn-Beamon, Section A2005\_177\_001\_006, TRT: 0:31:10 ?

Juliet Dobbs Blackburn-Beamon talks about developing training programs with British American Life Insurance Company in the Bahamas from 1968 to 1971. Blackburn-Beamon returned to New York City in 1971 to work for Celanese and to train for a position in upper management at Sears Roebuck. She then transferred to Atlanta, where she marketed a line of black hair care products called LeConté. In 1977, Blackburn-Beamon went to Sierra Leone to work for the United States Government Department of State's Agency in Development, (AID). She then worked at Atlanta's Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit (MARTA). In 1979, Blackburn-Beamon married African American architect LaFayette Beamon. In 1996, Blackburn-Beamon received her doctorate and

became a professor and chairperson of the Art and Architectural Studies Department at Morris Brown College and served as director of the John W. Dobbs Foundation for Arts and Humanities Education. She concludes the interview by reflecting upon her legacy and talking about her family.