

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Brenda Payton Jones

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Jones, Payton, Brenda, 1952-2005
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Brenda Payton Jones,
Dates:	April 3, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:08:10).
Abstract:	Newspaper columnist Brenda Payton Jones (1952 -) wrote for the Oakland Tribune and provided radio commentary on KQED-FM in the Bay Area. Jones was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 3, 2006, in San Francisco, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_058
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Journalist Brenda Payton was born Brenda Joyce Williams on August 24, 1952, in Omaha, Nebraska. At three years of age, Payton's parents (Dr. James B. Williams and Willeen Williams) moved the family to Chicago, Illinois. Payton was raised in Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood, attending the University of Chicago Laboratory School for elementary and high school. While at the Laboratory School, she began her interest in writing. As a high school student in the late 1960s, Payton was active in cheerleading and theater. Payton attended civil rights events at Reverend Jesse Jackson Sr.'s Operation PUSH, and rallies with Fred Hampton and the Black Panther Movement. By her senior year in high school, Payton was a National Merit Scholarship semi-finalist. She then began her college career as a theatre arts major at Pomona College.

Payton eventually changed her major and received her B.A. degree in history from Pomona College in 1973. She then studied West African literature in Ghana for one year as a Watson fellow. In 1974, Payton returned to the United States to attend graduate school. Upon receiving her M.A. degree in journalism from Boston University, she worked for the *New Bedford Standard Times* and the *Boston Phoenix*. Payton then took a position at the *San Francisco Examiner* covering general assignments in the area. In 1980, Robert Maynard, the first Black editor and publisher of a mainstream newspaper, recruited Payton to work at the *Oakland Tribune*.

For the past twenty-five years, Payton has written for the *Oakland Tribune* covering local and national political and social issues including the link between the health of African Americans and racial discrimination, underage prostitution, the internment of Japanese Americans, the United States war on terror, and Hurricane Katrina. Her writings have been published in *The New York Times* and *Thinking Black*, an anthology of African American columnists. She has also been a recipient of Stanford University's John S. Knight Fellowship. In 1992, Payton was an associate producer and the investigation director for a PBS documentary on mortgage lending discrimination entitled *Your Loan is Denied*. In 1994, her national report addressing violence among African American youth was published by the Children's Defense Fund's Black Community Crusade for Children. The Bay Area Black Journalists Society honored Payton in October 2005 for her contributions to journalism. In March 2006, *CityFlight*

Newsmagazine honored Payton as on the Ten Most Influential African Americans in the Bay Area. She continues to write for the *Oakland Tribune*, and does monthly radio commentary on public radio station, KQED-FM.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Brenda Payton Jones was conducted by Loretta Henry on April 3, 2006, in San Francisco, California, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Newspaper columnist Brenda Payton Jones (1952 -) wrote for the *Oakland Tribune* and provided radio commentary on KQED-FM in the Bay Area.

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:

Jones, Payton, Brenda, 1952-2005

Henry, Loretta (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Jones, Payton, Brenda, 1952-2005--Interviews

African American women journalists--California--Oakland--Interviews

African American radio broadcasters--California--Oakland--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Newspaper Columnist

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 Brenda Payton Jones, April 3, 2006. 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 Brenda Payton Jones, Section A2006_058_001_001, TRT:

0:30:10 ?

Brenda Payton Jones was born on August 24, 1952 in Omaha, Nebraska to Willeen Brown Williams and Dr. James Williams. Her paternal grandparents moved from Texas due to the demand for black teachers in New Mexico. Her paternal grandfather was barred from teaching in the state after he insisted on taking a holiday for President Abraham Lincoln's birthday. Instead of teaching, he started a homestead near Las Cruces, New Mexico. Her paternal grandmother was the first African American graduate of New Mexico State University. A Tuskegee Airman, Jones' father participated in the Freeman Field Mutiny. Jones' mother moved from New Albany, Mississippi to Omaha, Nebraska, where her father worked in a meat packing plant. She met Jones' father, the first black surgeon in an integrated residential surgery program, while he was a student at Creighton University. When Jones was three years old, her family moved to Hyde Park in Chicago, Illinois, where her father and uncles founded Williams Medical Clinic.

African American women journalists--California--Oakland--Interviews.

African American radio broadcasters--California--Oakland--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Brenda Payton Jones, Section A2006_058_001_002, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Brenda Payton Jones attended St. Thomas the Apostle School until fourth grade, when the school no longer accepted children from outside the parish. She transferred to University of Chicago Laboratory School, and her family's support helped her through the racism she experienced. After school, she visited her paternal grandmother's house, which always smelled of fried fish. Jones became an avid writer because of her teacher Louise Pliss, but never considered writing as a career. She briefly aspired to be a doctor, then considered becoming an actress. In high school, she spent time at Hyde Park's Promontory Point and joined the cheerleading team. Jones witnessed Fred Hampton's leadership when he successfully prevented an outbreak of gang violence at a rally in Hyde Park. Her parents were active in the NAACP, but did not understand her Black Power ideology. They refused to let her attend Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, so Jones enrolled at Pomona College instead and continued her student activism.

Video Oral History Interview with Brenda Payton Jones, Section A2006_058_001_003, TRT: 0:28:10 ?

Brenda Payton Jones entered Pomona College to pursue theater, but then decided to study history. She was inspired to pursue journalism by Ebony writer Louie Robinson. Upon graduating in 1973, she spent a year in Ghana as a Thomas J. Watson Fellow. Jones later moved to Boston, Massachusetts and earned her master's degree in journalism from Boston University. She recalls the city's violent desegregation process. After graduate school, Jones joined the staff of The Standard-Times in New Bedford, Massachusetts as its first African American reporter. Jones explains the differences between African Americans and New Bedford's large Cape Verdean population. After a few months, Jones joined The Boston Phoenix, where she was again the first African American writer. Jones moved to California where she wrote for the San Francisco Examiner. As general assignment reporter, she tried to write more about politics when Lionel Wilson became the first black mayor of Oakland, California.

Video Oral History Interview with Brenda Payton Jones, Section A2006_058_001_004, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Brenda Payton Jones was recruited by Robert C. Maynard to join the Oakland Tribune as he expanded the paper's diversity. She explains the value of diversity

in journalism and describes Maynard's philosophy. For twenty-five years, Jones wrote a column on social and political issues. She also worked on a documentary on discriminatory lending for 'Frontline,' although she preferred radio to television. Jones recalls seeing an African American congregation and a white congregation bond in the aftermath of a church burning, and compares it to modern segregation in Alabama. In 2006, Jones was named one of the ten most influential African Americans in the Bay Area. She was a founding member of the Bay Area Black Journalists Association, and reflects upon the advances in Oakland's media diversity as well as Oakland's changing demographics. She also describes her passion for dancing. Jones hopes to be remembered as a writer, and plans to continue to use her journalistic talents for the cause of social justice.

Video Oral History Interview with Brenda Payton Jones, Section A2006_058_001_005, TRT: 0:10:40 ?

Brenda Payton narrates her photographs.