

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Marie Louise Greenwood

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Greenwood, Marie L., 1912-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Marie Louise Greenwood,
Dates:	April 19, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:28:52).
Abstract:	Elementary school teacher Marie Louise Greenwood (1912 - 2019) was one of the first African American school teachers in Denver, Colorado, and donated The Marie Greenwood Papers to the Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library in Denver, Colorado. Greenwood was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 19, 2006, in Denver, Colorado. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_078
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Educator Marie Louise Greenwood was born on November 24, 1912 in Los Angeles, California. Her parents, a railroad chef and a domestic worker, moved the family to Denver, Colorado in 1925 searching for better opportunities. Having parents who stressed education, Greenwood decided to pursue teaching as a career. Upon graduating from West High School, her academic record as one of Colorado's top students earned her a scholarship. This enabled her to enroll in Colorado Teacher's College in Greeley where she was confronted with blatant racism. She was prevented from living on campus or joining any student organizations. In 1935, Greenwood was encouraged by the minister of her church to take the Colorado State Teacher's Examination. She successfully passed the written examination and oral interview. Upon receiving a letter of assignment entitling her to teach at Whittier Elementary School in 1935, Greenwood became one of the first African American school teachers in Denver.

In 1943, Greenwood married, and two years later, in 1945, she took a hiatus from teaching in order to raise a family. One of her four children became the first African American student to attend Newlon Elementary School. In 1953, Greenwood returned to teaching part-time as a substitute also at Newlon Elementary School. At this time, African American teachers were assigned only to schools in the predominantly African American northeast neighborhood of Denver. However, the parents of Newlon students realized Greenwood's proficiency at teaching, and in 1955, she was accepted as a full-time teacher.

Greenwood has donated *The Marie Greenwood Papers* to the Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library in Denver. This bequest contains materials spanning from the 1930s and 1940s and from the 1980s to 2001. She accumulated these documents during her years as a teacher and community volunteer.

Greenwood lives in Denver, Colorado where she wrote *Every Child Can Learn* which is being used by teachers in

many schools. As a result of her book, she has been a commencement speaker at the University of Northern Colorado, Martin Luther King Day speaker, student awards speaker and held meetings of professors and education students who have read the book. *Every Child Can Learn* is now in its second edition.

In 2001, the Marie L. Greenwood Academy in Denver, Colorado was named in her honor. On January 15, 2010, she received the Martin Luther King Trailblazer Award, honored by Representative Diana DiGette with a letter of congratulations which is registered in the Congressional Record. On May 7, 2010, the University of Northern Colorado honored her with the Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters. In 2013, Greenwood's autobiography entitled *By The Grace of God* was published.

Greenwood was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on April 19, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Marie Louise Greenwood was conducted by Shawn Wilson on April 19, 2006, in Denver, Colorado, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Elementary school teacher Marie Louise Greenwood (1912 - 2019) was one of the first African American school teachers in Denver, Colorado, and donated The Marie Greenwood Papers to the Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library in Denver, Colorado.

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:

Greenwood, Marie L., 1912-

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Greenwood, Marie L., 1912- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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 Marie Louise Greenwood, April 19, 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 Marie Louise Greenwood, Section A2006_078_001_001, TRT: 0:29:11 ?

Marie Louise Greenwood was born on November 24, 1912 in Los Angeles, California to Sarah Garret Anderson and Joseph Anderson. Growing up on a farm in Hondo, Texas, Greenwood's mother was raised by her grandparents after her mother died in childbirth. Born in Louisiana, Greenwood's father was Creole. Following an altercation with a white man, Greenwood's father changed his name and spent five years in Mexico, where he rode horses with Pancho Villa. He spoke Spanish and Patois fluently. Upon returning to the United States, Greenwood's father met and married her mother, who was seventeen years old. Greenwood recalls her third birthday party and enjoying figs from a neighbor's tree in Los Angeles. Upon moving to Prescott, Arizona in 1917, Greenwood became a Methodist and attended People A.M.E. Zion Church, against the wishes of her Baptist mother. Greenwood's father worked as a chef for the railroad and at Fort Whipple in Arizona. Greenwood describes a visit from her paternal uncle, Joseph Talamon.

Video Oral History Interview with Marie Louise Greenwood, Section A2006_078_001_002, TRT: 0:29:03 ?

Marie Louise Greenwood began kindergarten at age six at Lincoln Elementary School in Prescott, Arizona, after being bedridden for months during the influenza pandemic of 1918. Greenwood was placed in a first grade class, and proved to her teachers and parents she was ready to advance a grade. When Greenwood's family moved to Prescott's predominantly white neighborhood, she enrolled at Washington Elementary School, where she experienced discrimination from her fourth grade teacher. In 1925, the family moved to an apartment building in Denver, Colorado, where her father worked as a janitor. At Morey Junior High School, Greenwood encountered another teacher who discriminated against her, but refused to allow this to hinder her education. Greenwood also enjoyed playing sports. She recalls the song, 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary,' from World War I and describes the small African American population of Denver in the 1920s.

Video Oral History Interview with Marie Louise Greenwood, Section A2006_078_001_003, TRT: 0:29:49 ?

Marie Louise Greenwood grew up in Denver's predominantly African American Five Points neighborhood, where she was active in the YWCA and Young People's Division at Shorter Community A.M.E. Church in Denver. Discontent with the segregation of Denver's movie theaters, Greenwood joined the Cosmopolitan Club of Denver, whose founder, Dr. Clarence Holmes, Jr., discovered a Denver law that prohibited discrimination in public places. The law was upheld by the Colorado Restaurant Association, after the organization was fined. Greenwood's parents encouraged her to do her best in school in spite of any discrimination she faced. Greenwood became interested in becoming a teacher after teaching Sunday school. She was not deterred by her academic counselor at East High School who told her she would never go to college. After transferring to West High School, Greenwood graduated at the top of her class and received a scholarship to attend Colorado State Teachers College in Greeley.

Video Oral History Interview with Marie Louise Greenwood, Section A2006_078_001_004, TRT: 0:29:56 ?

Marie Louise Greenwood attended Colorado State Teachers College, and was a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority in Denver, Colorado. She played sports and considered becoming a physical education teacher, but instead trained as an elementary school teacher. Her parents worked multiple jobs to pay for her education, including cleaning the Daniels and Fisher Company offices in Denver, Colorado. Greenwood graduated with a bachelor's degree from Colorado State Teachers College in 1935. Although there were limited positions for African American teachers, Greenwood obtained a probationary teaching assignment at Whittier Elementary School, earning \$1,200 a year. Greenwood had been prevented from student teaching while in college, and had to adjust to the classroom; but, with the encouragement of the principal, was able to take charge of her students, and win over concerned parents who initially questioned her teaching abilities. Greenwood also remembers meeting her husband, Bill Greenwood, Sr.

Video Oral History Interview with Marie Louise Greenwood, Section A2006_078_001_005, TRT: 0:30:53 ?

Marie Louise Greenwood recalls her early friendship with her husband of forty years, Bill Greenwood, Sr. After marrying, Greenwood temporarily left her teaching position to raise their children. She impressed the principal and fellow parents at Jesse H. Newlon Elementary School in Denver, Colorado as the president of the parent teacher association, and was asked to substitute teach. Soon after, she returned to teaching full time. After retiring in 1974, Greenwood began reading to children at Shorter Community A.M.E. Church and Park Hill Elementary School through the Read Aloud Program at the Denver Public Library. In 2001, Denver Public Schools named the Marie L. Greenwood Academy, in honor of her legacy as an educator. She talks about her book, 'Every Child Can Learn'; shares her advice to children; and reflects upon her legacy. Greenwood concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.