

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Gloria Toote

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Toote, Gloria, 1931-2017
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Toote,
Dates:	December 4, 2006 and November 29, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	11 Betacame SP videocassettes (5:29:25).
Abstract:	Real estate entrepreneur, lawyer, and federal government appointee Gloria Toote (1931 - 2017) served as an advisor to four American presidents. She was vice chairman of the United States Office of Private Sector Initiatives during the Reagan administration, and was president of TREA Estates and Enterprises, Inc., an apartment building operating company in New York City. Toote was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 4, 2006 and November 29, 2006, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_150
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Gloria E.A. Toote, attorney and real estate developer, was born on November 8, 1931, in New York City. Toote has been advisor to four American presidents. She is a graduate of Howard University where she received her B.A. degree in 1952 and went on to receive her J.D. degree in 1954. To complete her studies, she also attended Columbia University, where she received her M.A. degree in 1956. Toote, a conservative Republican, has held positions in the Nixon, Ford and Reagan presidential administrations.

From 1966 to 1970, Toote served as president of Toote Town Publishing Company and Town Recording Studios, Incorporated. From 1971 to 1973, she was Assistant Director of ACTION, and from 1973 to 1975, she was Assistant Secretary for Equal Opportunity in the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. In 1976, she served as an uncommitted New York State delegate to the Republican National Convention and gave the seconding nominating speech for Reagan as president. During the Reagan administration, Toote was vice chairman of the United States Office of Private Sector Initiatives. She is a founding member of the board of governors of the National Black United Fund and a member of the steering committee for Citizens for the Republic. In the late 1980s when Toote began developing real estate in New York City, she became the president of TREA Estates and Enterprises, Incorporated, an apartment building operating firm.

Toote received special achievement awards from the National Association of Black Women Attorneys; and in 1992, the National Political Congress of Black Women recognized her contributions for furthering the participation of African American women in the political process.

Toote lived in New York City.

Toote passed away on May 18, 2017.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Gloria Toote was conducted by Shawn Wilson on December 4, 2006 and November 29, 2006, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 11 Betacame SP videocassettes. Real estate entrepreneur, lawyer, and federal government appointee Gloria Toote (1931 - 2017) served as an advisor to four American presidents. She was vice chairman of the United States Office of Private Sector Initiatives during the Reagan administration, and was president of TREA Estates and Enterprises, Inc., an apartment building operating company in New York City.

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:

Toote, Gloria, 1931-2017

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Toote, Gloria, 1931-2017 --Interviews

African American women political activists--Interviews

Women conservatives--Interviews

African American women executives--Interviews

African American women lawyers--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Federal Government Appointee

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Gloria Toote, December 4, 2006 and November 29, 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 Gloria Toote, Section A2006_150_001_001, TRT: 0:29:37 ?

Gloria Toote was born on November 8, 1931 in New York City to Lillie Tookes Toote and Frederick Toote. Her maternal grandmother, Frances Tookes, was from Macon, Georgia; and her maternal grandfather, Thomas Tookes, Sr., had Cherokee ancestry. They raised her mother in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where Toote's maternal great uncle, W.A. Tookes, owned a casket manufacturing company. Toote's father was born in the Bahamas, and met and married her mother after moving to Philadelphia. There, he joined the Marcus Garvey movement, and served as vice president of the local chapter of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Later, Toote's parents relocated to New York City's Harlem neighborhood, where her father became a bishop. He also served as the president of the Interdenominational Ministers Alliance, and befriended politician Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. In addition, Toote remembers UNIA leader and aviation pioneer Hubert Fautleroy Julian, and businessman Samuel B. Fuller.

African American women political activists--Interviews.

Women conservatives--Interviews.

African American women executives--Interviews.

African American women lawyers--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Toote, Section A2006_150_001_002, TRT: 0:30:07 ?

Gloria Toote's maternal grandparents, Frances Tookes and Thomas Tookes, Sr., owned a farm in Virginia. Her paternal grandparents, Clarita North Toote and Thaddeus Toote, were wealthy landowners in the Bahamas, where their properties included a restaurant and most of Nassau's Main Street. Her paternal uncle also served as the Bahamas' solicitor general. Toote grew up in New York City's Harlem neighborhood, where her father was a bishop. She began her education at P.S. 119, and went on to attend Junior High School 136, Harriet Beecher Stowe Junior High School and George Washington High School, where singer Harry Belafonte was among her classmates. Years later, after Toote earned a degree from Columbia Law School, she was recruited by attorney Morris L. Ernst to join the law firm of Greenbaum, Wolff and Ernst as a property lawyer. Toote also remembers her father's death, the housing conditions in Harlem and Reverend Major Jealous Divine.

Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Toote, Section A2006_150_001_003, TRT: 0:30:13 ?

Gloria Toote grew up in New York City's Harlem neighborhood, where she belonged to Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.'s youth group at the Abyssinian Baptist Church. She began her education at New York City's P.S. 119, where she experienced racial discrimination from a white teacher, who removed her from the starring role in the school play and made a derogatory remark about her hair. Toote went on to attend Junior High School 136, Harriet Beecher Stowe Junior High School, where she excelled in science. She aspired to enroll in The Bronx High School of Science; and, although she did not pass the entrance exam, was encouraged by her guidance counselor to study science further. After she was rejected, Toote's parents used a friend's work address to secure her enrollment at the integrated George Washington High School. Upon graduating, she applied to study advertising at the City College of New York. Toote also remembers the bakery owned by her paternal grandmother, Frances Tookes.

Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Toote, Section A2006_150_001_004, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Gloria Toote was admitted to Howard University under the sponsorship of Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. in 1948, when she was sixteen years old. Her classmates included civil rights leader Andrew Young and New York City Mayor David N. Dinkins. Toote majored in pre-law studies with her father's encouragement, and also studied theater under Professor Anne Cook. She served as president of the Howard University Players; and wrote a column in The Hilltop student newspaper, where she published an interview with actor James Edwards. During this time, Toote was mentored by Eudora Williams Webster, the wife of jazz musician Ben Webster, who hosted gatherings of intellectuals like poet Owen Dodson and philosopher Alain Locke. After graduating in 1952, Toote matriculated at the Howard University School of Law, where she starred in Euripides' play, 'Alcestis,' during her first year. Toote also remembers experiencing southern segregation for the first time in Washington, D.C.

Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Toote, Section A2006_150_001_005, TRT: 0:30:40 ?

Gloria Toote excelled at the Howard University School of Law, where she was one of three female students. She was inspired by her procedural law professor, George E.C. Hayes; and enjoyed her coursework in constitutional law. During her final year, Toote was assigned to assist with the cases of Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka and Bolling v. Sharpe. She was part of a team that checked constitutional citations; and became acquainted with attorneys Thurgood Marshall, James M. Nabrit, Jr. and Constance Baker Motley. She also befriended the black clerks at the U.S. Supreme Court, who allowed her to listen to the arguments and decision of Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka in 1954. Later that year, Toote graduated from the Howard University School of Law, and returned to New York City, where she passed the bar examination in 1955. Toote also recalls President Ronald Reagan's support for civil rights, and her role on the census advisory council.

Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Toote, Section A2006_150_002_006, TRT: 0:30:35 ?

Gloria Toote earned a bachelor's degree at Howard University, and then enrolled in the Howard University School of Law. While a student there, she served as a research assistant to NAACP attorney Thurgood Marshall during the Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka case. Toote graduated with a law degree in 1954, and passed the New York City bar examination in 1955. She went on to earn a master's degree in 1956 from the Columbia Law School, where she met black attorney Cora T. Walker. At the start of her career, Toote was one of ten African American women who practiced law in New York City. She belonged to the Republican Party and the National Business League, where she was introduced to union leader A. Philip Randolph and Tammany Hall leader J. Raymond Jones by Chairman Berkeley G. Burrell. She remembers notable members of the Harlem community like Malcolm X and singer Ethel Waters, and talks about her experiences of discriminatory policing. Toote also narrates her photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Toote, Section A2006_150_002_007, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Gloria Toote earned a master's degree from Columbia Law School in New York City. During this time, she became active in the Republican Party, and was mentored by Harlem's district leader, Harold C. Burton. She also wrote for the New York Amsterdam News. Upon graduating in 1956, Toote was hired as general counsel to the Coordinating Council for Negro Performers; and, alongside actors Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, helped organize the first national television blackout to protest discrimination against black actors on Broadway

and in the motion picture industry. In 1957, Toote joined the editorial staff of Time magazine, where she covered national affairs. In 1958, Toote ran for a seat in the New York State Assembly; and, although her campaign was sponsored by the newly elected New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller, she ultimately lost to Democrat Bessie Buchanan. Toote talks about the political corruption in New York City, and also recalls her achievements on the board of the American Arbitration Association.

Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Toote, Section A2006_150_002_008, TRT: 0:30:01 ?

Gloria Toote partnered with music producer Ed Townsend and nightclub owner Trude Heller to purchase the Town Sound Recording Studio in Englewood, New Jersey. There, they founded the Tru-Glow-Town Records and TNT Records labels; and recorded artists like The Animals, The Mothers of Invention, Miriam Makeba and Marian Anderson. Eventually, singer James Brown purchased a controlling share in TNT Records. During this time, Toote also represented producer Luther Dixon and The Crests, who filed a copyright case against singer Dick Clark in regard to the authorship of the song 'Sixteen Candles.' However, Toote's success in the recording industry was cut short when the studio was destroyed in a fire. She went on to defend labor leader L. Joseph Overton against charges of racketeering; and, in 1971, was appointed as the assistant director of ACTION, where she oversaw federal voluntary service programs like the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps VISTA, the Service Corps of Retired Executives and Active Corps of Executives.

Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Toote, Section A2006_150_002_009, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Gloria Toote's first government role was as the assistant director of ACTION, an agency tasked with the oversight of federal volunteer programs. During her tenure, she learned about objective-based management, and experienced frequent discrimination from her staff. Toote also became involved with President Richard Nixon's affirmative action initiatives; and was featured on the cover of The New York Times alongside Assistant Secretary of Labor Arthur Fletcher, who pioneered the affirmative action policies that became known as the Philadelphia Plan. She was mentored by President Nixon at meetings of the presidential cabinet and the Congressional Black Caucus; and, in 1973, was recruited to join the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Toote became the assistant secretary of HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, where she was responsible for the enforcement of fair housing laws. She served in this capacity until 1975, when President Gerald Rudolph Ford, Jr. began his administration.

Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Toote, Section A2006_150_002_010, TRT: 0:30:14 ?

Gloria Toote served as the assistant secretary of the Office of Fair and Equal Opportunity, an agency of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In this role, she halted the construction of schools slated to be built in segregated communities, and spoke out against the inferior conditions at Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley's proposed public housing site. After leaving HUD, Toote served on the board of the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace at Stanford University, where she and economist Walter E. Williams were the only black members. She later became a founding board member of the National Black United Fund. Toote continued her political career as a consultant on Ronald Reagan's presidential campaign, and was later named vice chair of his President's Task Force on Private Sector Initiatives. In 1992, Toote was named to the board of directors for the Federal National Mortgage Association by President George Herbert Walker Bush. She also reflects upon her political ideology.

Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Toote, Section A2006_150_002_011, TRT: 0:29:08 ?

Gloria Toote served on the board of directors for the Federal National Mortgage Association from 1992, under President George Herbert Walker Bush's administration. She reflects upon her role as an African American Republican, and describes her plans for the future, as well as her hopes and concerns for the Republican Party. Toote also talks about U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. She concludes the interview by reflecting upon her life and career.