

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Alice Windom

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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>	Windom, Alice, 1936-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Alice Windom,
<b>Dates:</b>	December 19, 2006, December 7, 2007 and October 17, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2006 and 2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	13 Betacame SP videocassettes (6:10:41).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Social worker Alice Windom (1936 - 2022) was part of a historic group of African American expatriates in Ghana. She worked on the Encyclopedia Africana with W.E.B DuBois and helped to plan Malcolm X's trip to Ghana. Windom was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 19, 2006, December 7, 2007 and October 17, 2007, in St. Louis, Missouri. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2006_181
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Social worker Alice Mary Windom was born on March 30, 1936, in St. Louis, Missouri to Frances Louise Jones Windom and Dr. John Henry Windom. She was from a family of educators. Her grandfather, Christopher Columbus Jones, was Southern Illinois University's first African American student. Windom's parents met at the University of Illinois and raised their daughter on the campuses of Albany State College and Prairie View A&M University. She attended Prairie View Training School in Texas and Cote Brillante Elementary School in St. Louis. Windom graduated from Sumner High School in 1953. Offered half tuition at Central State University (CSU) in Wilberforce, Ohio, Windom was exposed to African American historian and school president Dr. Charles Wesley and lectures by Thurgood Marshall, J.A. Rogers and others. She started and organized a successful sit-in of Xenia, Ohio's Geyer's Restaurant in 1957. Graduating that year with her B.S. degree in social work, Windom went on to earn her M.S.W. degree from the University of Chicago in 1959.

From June 1958 to August of 1962, Windom worked as a social worker and as a child welfare worker for the State of Illinois Department of Mental Health Division of Family and Children's Services. From 1962 to 1964, Windom lived and worked in Ghana, West Africa. Working as a secondary school teacher and secretary to the Ethiopian Ambassador, Windom was a part of an historic group of diverse African American expatriates in Ghana which included John Henrik Clarke, Maya Angelou, Curtis "Kojo" Morrow and the elder W.E.B. DuBois. In 1964, Windom helped plan the itinerary for Malcolm X's trip to Ghana and served as administrative assistant for the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa from 1964 to 1968, organizing international conferences in seven countries. From 1969 to 1972, Windom was a social welfare organizer for the Department of Social Welfare in Lusaka, Zambia. In the United States, she served as director of social services for the St. Louis Medium Security Institution from 1973 to 1974. In 1977, Windom sued the City of St. Louis for racial and sexual discrimination and the denial of free speech.

Known for her many well-documented excursions to the African world, Windom served as coordinator for the James T. Bush Center at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, initiating research and workshops in employment, education, housing, and law. A sought after lecturer, Windom was a member of a number of organizations, including the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilization and the African Heritage Studies Association.

Windom lived in St. Louis, Missouri.

Alice Mary Windom was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on December 19, 2006.

Windom passed away on February 10, 2022, at the age of 85.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Alice Windom was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 19, 2006, December 7, 2007 and October 17, 2007, in St. Louis, Missouri, and was recorded on 13 Betacame SP videocassettes. Social worker Alice Windom (1936 - 2022) was part of a historic group of African American expatriates in Ghana. She worked on the Encyclopedia Africana with W.E.B DuBois and helped to plan Malcolm X's trip to Ghana.

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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:

Windom, Alice, 1936-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Windom, Alice, 1936---Interviews

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African American social workers--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:

Social Worker

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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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 Alice Windom, December 19, 2006, December 7, 2007 and October 17, 2007. 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 Alice Windom, Section A2006\_181\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:41 ?

Alice Windom was born on March 30, 1936 in St. Louis, Missouri. Her mother, Frances Louise Jones Windom, was born on January 10, 1908 in Edwardsville, Illinois to Christopher Columbus Jones (C.C. Jones) and Anna Armstrong Jones. C.C. Jones' family came from Virginia, and his father was Prince Albert Jones. C.C. Jones was born in Mount Carmel, Illinois on March 21, 1878, lived in Murphysboro, Illinois and attended Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois. He was principal of the Lincoln School in Edwardsville, Illinois from 1903 until the schools were integrated in 1955. Windom talks about the 1904 St. Louis World' Fair and why African Americans did not attend the fair. Windom's mother attended the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she met Windom's father, John Henry Windom. John Windom was born on April 20, 1910 in St. Louis, Missouri to Mary Davis Windom and Jackson T.O.P. Windom.

African American families--Illinois--Edwardsville.

African Americans--Education (Higher).

African American families--Missouri--Saint Louis.

African American parents--Illinois--Edwardsville.

Exhibitions--1900-1910.

Saint Louis (Mo.).

Video Oral History Interview with Alice Windom, Section A2006\_181\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:22 ?

Alice Windom describes her father's family background. Windom's father, John Henry Windom, Sr., was the only surviving child out of seven of Mary Davis Windom and Jackson T.O.P. Windom. Jackson Windom died when Windom's father was in high school, but Mary Windom, her Aunt Margaret, and her mother Sara Pope Davis (ph.), whom Windom called "Sally Baby," lived together in St. Louis, Missouri. While Sara Pope Davis was alive during slavery, she was blind and deaf by the time Windom was born. Windom's mother, Frances Louise Jones Windom, worked as a teacher and was secretly married to Windom's father until they decided to start a family. Windom lived in Madison, Illinois, but her family moved to Bloomington, Indiana so her father could study at Indiana University. Her family then moved to Albany, Georgia, where her father taught at Albany State College, and to Prairie View, Texas where Windom attended Prairie View Training School. She recalls her childhood, including getting molested by a neighborhood teenager.

African American families--Georgia--Albany.

African American families--Texas--Prairie View.

Children--Crimes against--United States.

Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College.

African Americans--Education (Elementary).

Child sexual abuse.

African American businesspeople.

Video Oral History Interview with Alice Windom, Section A2006\_181\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:36 ?

Alice Windom recalls her experience in Prairie View, Texas during the 1940s, including her family's victory garden during World War II. Windom attended Prairie View Training School, which was on the campus of Prairie View A&M University. Her family read the Pittsburgh Courier and the Chicago Defender, and Windom learned of the lynchings that were occurring throughout the country and introduced Windom to the work of J.A. Rogers. Windom recalls being strongly affected by the death of President Franklin Roosevelt in 1945. Around 1947, Windom's father received his Ph.D. from Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana and Windom's family moved to St. Louis, Missouri in 1948, where he taught at Stowe Teacher's College. Windom's parents were atheists, and Windom remembers attending church in Prairie View and getting baptized before deciding not to go back to the church. Windom also remembers her family's Christmas celebrations and the kinds of gifts she would buy.

African Americans--Race relations--United States.

African American children.

African American families--Texas--Prairie View.

African Americans--Education (Elementary).

African American parents.

African Americans--Religious life.

African American churches.

African American newspapers.

Pittsburgh Courier Publishing Co.

Chicago defender (Chicago, Ill. : Weekly).

African American universities and colleges--Texas--Prairie View.

Video Oral History Interview with Alice Windom, Section A2006\_181\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:24 ?

Alice Windom's family moved back to St. Louis, Missouri in 1948, where Windom attended Cote Brillante Elementary School and Sumner High School. Windom disliked her experience at Cote Brillante, but excelled in high school. At Sumner High School, her principal was George D. Brantley and her teacher included Mr. Davenport, Mr. Marshall, and Mr. Wiley Thompson. Windom was recruited by Walter G. Sellers to attend Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio, and her teachers attempted to discourage her from attending a historically black university. She graduated from high school in 1953 and enrolled at Central State University, where the president was Charles Wesley. Windom recalls the history of Central State University. Through school assemblies, she heard speakers like Thurgood Marshall and J.A. Rogers. While attending Central State University, Windom was required to conduct sociological research in the small town of Xenia, Ohio, where she began to sit-in at Geyer's Restaurant.

African Americans--Education (Secondary)--Missouri--Saint Louis.

African Americans--Education (Higher).

Central State University (Wilberforce, Ohio).

African American families--Illinois--Edwardsville.

Segregation in education--Missouri--Saint Louis.

Video Oral History Interview with Alice Windom, Section A2006\_181\_001\_005, TRT: 0:28:12 ?

Alice Windom became active in CORE in St. Louis, Missouri with activists like Norman Seay and HistoryMaker and U.S. Congressman William Clay, Sr. While a student at Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio, Windom

protested segregation at Geyer's Restaurant in Xenia, Ohio, and students from Central State University were able to integrate the restaurant after Windom graduated with her B.A. degree in social work in 1957. Windom remembers the social life at the university, and how they discouraged co-ed activities. During the summer of 1954, Windom worked at Belva Manufacturing Company as a junior bookkeeper, but lost the job after she was hospitalized for an ovarian cyst. During the remaining summers while she attended college, Windom worked at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio. Windom's father died of kidney failure in 1956. In 1957, Windom returned to St. Louis to live with her mother before enrolling in graduate school at the University of Chicago.

Civil rights demonstrations.

African American college students.

Student movements--United States.

High school students--Employment.

College students--Employment.

Wright-Patterson Air Force Base (Ohio).

African American periodicals.

Central State University (Wilberforce, Ohio).

Video Oral History Interview with Alice Windom, Section A2006\_181\_002\_006, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Alice Windom enrolled at the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration in Chicago, Illinois in 1957. At the University of Chicago, Windom developed hives due to the stress of being in an environment that knew so little about the African American community. Windom's second-year was more enjoyable thanks to her black fieldwork supervisor named Bertha Swindall. Windom received her master's degree in social work in 1959, and began working in the Department of Children and Family Services for the State of Illinois, where she conducted home studies for intercountry adoptions under supervisor Miriam Kilduff. During this time, Windom also joined the African American Heritage Association which was led by Ishmael Flory, attended the Washington Park Forum with intellectuals like F. H. Hammurabi, and befriended members of the Nation of Islam including Christine Johnson and E. U. Essien-Udom. She remembers defending the Nation of Islam in a Chatham and Avalon Park neighborhood meeting.

Minorities in social work education--United States.

Women in social work education--United States.

Social work education--United States.

Intercountry adoption--Korea.

Intercountry adoption--China.

Korean War, 1950-1953.

University of Chicago.

Nation of Islam (Chicago, Ill.).

Video Oral History Interview with Alice Windom, Section A2006\_181\_002\_007, TRT: 0:31:46 ?

Alice Windom recalls a meeting where she defended the Nation of Islam in the Chatham and Avalon Park neighborhoods of Chicago, Illinois. With E.U. Essien-Udom, Windom attended Nation of Islam events, including speeches by Malcolm X and the Honorable Elijah Mohammad. Windom and Essien-Udom were also founding members of the Pan African Students Organization of the Americas (PASOA) in Chicago, Illinois after the All African Students Union of the Americas was disbanded. Windom recalls celebrating Ghana's independence

in 1957 and Nigeria's independence in 1960. In October of 1962, Windom left the United States to move to Accra, Ghana in the midst of the Cuban Missile Crisis. On the first leg of her trip, Windom traveled to New York City and attempted to sail to Africa by boat. She then flew to London, England and finally to Accra, Ghana, where she was hired to teach English literature and history at O'Reilly Secondary High School. Windom reflects on teaching her students about British and African culture.

Nation of Islam (Chicago, Ill.).

Pan-Africanism.

African Americans--Travel--Ghana.

International travel.

X, Malcolm, 1925-1965.

Elijah Muhammad, 1897-1975.

English language--Study and teaching (Secondary)--Foreign speakers.

Video Oral History Interview with Alice Windom, Section A2006\_181\_002\_008, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Alice Windom lived in Ghana from 1962 until 1964. She reflects on the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah and the freedom she felt while living there, as well as the fall of Nkrumah's government in 1966 after she left. In Ghana, Windom was part of a noted group of expatriates including Dr. Robert Lee and his wife, Sara Lee; Carlos Allston and Frank Robinson, who started the All-Afra Electric Company; Tom Brown, who worked in refrigeration and air conditioning; plumbing contractor Lou Gardner; actor and writer Julian Mayfield; labor activist Victoria Garvin; W.E.B. DuBois; Dr. Alphaeus Hunton; and HistoryMaker Maya Angelou. Windom recalls a picnic trip to Winneba, Ghana that ended when Angelou's son, Guy Johnson, broke his leg in a car accident. Windom recalls meeting DuBois and working with him and Dr. Hunton on the Encyclopedia Africana. She also recalls the DuBois' death on the eve of a celebration of the March on Washington in 1963. In 1964, Windom helped plan Malcolm X's visit to Ghana.

X, Malcolm, 1925-1965.

African diaspora--Encyclopedias.

Blacks--Encyclopedias.

Nkrumah, Kwame, 1909-1972.

Ghana--Politics and government--1957-1979.

African Americans--Relations with Africans.

Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt), 1868-1963.

Angelou, Maya.

X, Malcolm, 1925-1965--Political and social views.

Ghana.

Video Oral History Interview with Alice Windom, Section A2006\_181\_002\_009, TRT: 0:31:10 ?

Alice Windom moved from Accra, Ghana to Ethiopia in 1964. Hoping to meet with Malcolm X and become the African arm of the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), Windom traveled to Cairo, Egypt and to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where she ran into Malcolm at her hotel, and she unsuccessfully attempted to set up a meeting between Malcolm X and Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie in October of 1964. Windom worked in the industry and housing division of the United Nations in Ethiopia under South African Bax Nomvete and assistant director of personnel Kofi Annan. Windom reflects on the culture and geography of Addis Ababa and on how the UN was treated by

Ethiopians. In 1969, Windom traveled through Asia before moving to Zambia to work in the Department of Labor and Social Services under President Kenneth Kaunda. In 1973, Windom returned to St. Louis, Missouri to be director of social services at the St. Louis Medium Security Institution; and, in 1974, she was fired after filing a sexual discrimination complaint.

African Americans--Relations with Africans.

United Nations. Economic Commission for Africa.

X, Malcolm, 1925-1965.

African American social workers--Missouri--Saint Louis.

Discrimination in employment.

Ethiopia.

Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia, 1892-1975.

Missouri. Dept. of Corrections.

Video Oral History Interview with Alice Windom, Section A2006\_181\_003\_010, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Alice Windom sued the City of St. Louis, Missouri for sexual discrimination after she was fired for a complaint about hiring procedures in 1974. In 1975, she began working for the Institute of Black Studies in St. Louis, Missouri, an organization founded by Robert L. Williams. Windom recalls Williams' accomplishments, including co-founding the Black Studies Department at Washington University in St. Louis with HistoryMaker Jack Arnett Kirkland, coining the term "Ebonics," and creating an I.Q. test that favored African Americans. She also recalls the fight in 1979 to keep the historic Homer G. Phillips Hospital in St. Louis open. In 1975, Windom attended the Organization of African Unity Conference in Kampala, Uganda with her friend, Dr. Emily Maliwa. At the conference, Maliwa met with Muammar Gaddafi and Yasser Arafat and experienced the chaos after Nigerian leader Yakubu Gowon was overthrown. When she returned to St. Louis, Windom became director of the social services program at Union-Sarah Health Center.

Homer G. Phillips Hospital.

African American social workers.

Pan-Africanism.

African Americans--Travel--Africa.

Social workers--Missouri--Saint Louis.

Video Oral History Interview with Alice Windom, Section A2006\_181\_003\_011, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Alice Windom worked at the Yeatman/Union-Sarah Health Center in St. Louis, Missouri, and reflects on the fate of community health centers like Bobby E. Wright Comprehensive Behavioral Health Center in Chicago, Illinois. Windom helped write the proposal and protocols for another health center in St. Louis, Missouri, but conflicts with the director, Rodney Robinson, caused the project to fail. Around 1981, Windom was chosen by U.S. Congressman and HistoryMaker William Clay, Sr. to run the St. Louis office of the Booker T. Washington Foundation to encourage the growth of black-owned businesses. In the mid-1980s, she served as coordinator for the James T. Bush Center at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, where she invited in speakers like John Henrik Clarke, Charles Finch, and HistoryMaker Yosef ben-Jochannan. In 1984, Windom visited the Olmec heads in Mexico with Ivan van Sertima, and, in 1987, she was on the historic trip to Egypt with the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations (ASCAC).

Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations. Conference.

Mexico--Civilization--African influences.  
African American social workers.  
University of Missouri--St. Louis. Public Policy Research Centers.  
United States. Dept. of Defense.  
African Americans--Travel--Egypt.  
African Americans--Travel--Mexico.  
Minority business enterprises--Missouri--Saint Louis.  
Women-owned business enterprises--Missouri--Saint Louis.

Video Oral History Interview with Alice Windom, Section A2006\_181\_003\_012, TRT: 0:30:20 ?

Alice Windom coordinated speakers at the James T. Bush Center at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, where she hosted speakers including Dr. Sylvia Boone, whom Windom had known in Ghana. She reflects on Boone's personality, scholarship, and death. Windom also reflects on the treatment of women in Africa under both Islamic and non-Islamic governments, and how African religions value women. As a result of her previous trip to Mexico, Windom was fascinated by the Olmec heads and returned in 1989 and 1990 to photograph them. She also discussed their significance as distinctly African heads found in the Western hemisphere. Finally, Windom shared the circumstances that led her to retire from the Bush Center in 1998 and the aftermath of her house fire in 2001.

University of Missouri--St. Louis. Public Policy Research Centers.  
Boone, Sylvia Ardyn.  
Mexico--Civilization--African influences.  
Women--Islamic countries--Social conditions.  
Women--Africa, West--Social conditions.  
Dwellings--Fires and fire prevention.  
Olmec sculpture.  
Olmec art.  
Africa, West.

Video Oral History Interview with Alice Windom, Section A2006\_181\_003\_013, TRT: 0:13:00 ?

Alice Windom shares her hopes and concerns for the African American community and for Africa. Windom talks about the importance of Africa to African Americans and what she would change about her own life. She ends the interview by reflecting on her legacy, her family, and how she would like to be remembered.

African American families--Missouri--Saint Louis.  
Africa--Foreign public opinion.  
African Americans--Relations with Africans.