

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Shirley James

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	James, Shirley B., 1946-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Shirley James,
Dates:	January 17, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:07:41).
Abstract:	Academic administrator and newspaper publishing chief executive Shirley James (1946 -) was the owner and former publisher and editor of the Savannah Tribune. As a Licensed Professional Counselor, James held positions as Director of Testing, Vice President of Student Affairs and Counselor-Orientation Director at Savannah State University. James was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 17, 2007, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_013
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Shirley James was born in Georgetown, South Carolina on September 5, 1946. Her mother, Camille Barber, was a schoolteacher and her father, Eli Baxter Barber, was a mail porter. In 1964, James graduated from Howard High School. She continued her education at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, where she received her B.A. degree in psychology in 1968. She went on to receive her M.A. degree in education from Harvard University in 1970.

In 1971, James became a counselor and administrator for Savannah State University. She also held positions as Director of Testing, Vice President of Student Affairs and Counselor Orientation Director. During her tenure, James developed Peer Counselors, a committee to support the students of Savannah State University.

James also became a publisher and editor for The Tribune, a weekly newspaper founded by James' husband, Robert Earl James, that focuses on the issues of African Americans.

In 2002, James left her position at Savannah State University to become the Coordinator of the Savannah Black Heritage Festival. Between 2004 and 2005, she served on the Board of Directors of the Savannah Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, and in 2005, she was appointed to a five year term for Savannah's Airport Commission. James is a member of several professional organizations as well as owner of the Education Testing Services in Savannah.

James and her husband Robert live in Savannah, Georgia. They have three adult children.

James was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 17, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Shirley James was conducted by Denise Gines on January 17, 2007, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Academic administrator and newspaper publishing chief executive Shirley James (1946 -) was the owner and former publisher and editor of the Savannah Tribune. As a Licensed Professional Counselor, James held positions as Director of Testing, Vice President of Student Affairs and Counselor-Orientation Director at Savannah State University.

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:

James, Shirley B., 1946-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

James, Shirley B., 1946- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Civic Leader

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 Shirley James, January 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).

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 Shirley James, Section A2007_013_001_001, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Shirley James was born on September 5, 1946 in Georgetown, South Carolina to Camille Moses Barber and Eli Barber, Jr. Her maternal great-great grandfather, Edmund Easterling, owned the Easterlin Plantation in Okatie, South Carolina, and bequeathed the land his children, including James' maternal great-grandmother, Nancy Easterling Commander. James' maternal grandmother, Lula Commander Moses, became a teacher and midwife after graduating from Morris

College in Sumter, South Carolina. James' mother, also a Morris College graduate, taught at Howard High School in Georgetown for forty-four years. James' father was born in Charlotte, North Carolina to Amanda Barber and entrepreneur Eli Barber, Sr. He attended Livingstone College in Salisbury, North Carolina for two years, and then became a waiter in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, where he met James' mother. They married in Georgetown, where James' father worked at the International Paper Company, and was an active member and trustee of Bethel A.M.E. Church.

Video Oral History Interview with Shirley James, Section A2007_013_001_002, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Shirley James grew up in a close-knit community in Georgetown, South Carolina with her maternal family, including her uncle, Thomas Moses; aunt, Ethel Moses Bessellieu; and cousins. She attended the segregated J.B. Beck Elementary School, where she was taught by Leola Reeder Beck. At Howard High School, James played in the marching band and orchestra, belonged to the National Honor Society and was elected school queen. She watched movies at the segregated Palace Theater and Strand Theater, and listened to the college choirs that visited Bethesda Missionary Baptist Church, where she belonged to the congregation. James also visited the all-black McKenzie Beach in Pawleys Island, South Carolina with her family, including her older brother, Eli Barber, III, who served for thirty-five years in the U.S. Army, and retired as a command sergeant major; and her younger brother, Brendon Barber, Sr., who worked at Peoples Express Airlines after graduating from Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan.

Video Oral History Interview with Shirley James, Section A2007_013_001_003, TRT: 0:30:10 ?

Shirley James served as the president of Mu Alpha Theta and the National Honor Society at Howard High School in Georgetown, South Carolina. She worked part time selling candy for a local store, but quit due to harassment from the store manager, and obtained cashier position at another store in town. With the encouragement of her maternal grandmother, Lula Commander Moses, James enrolled at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, where the president was Albert E. Manley, and her residential advisor was Edna Johnson. During her college years, James protested the Vietnam War, and heard Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. speak at Morehouse College. She also participated in a student exchange program at Cedar Crest College in Allentown, Pennsylvania, where she experienced racial discrimination from a professor. James, a successful student, was selected to join Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges. Upon graduation, she enrolled in the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University.

Video Oral History Interview with Shirley James, Section A2007_013_001_004, TRT: 0:30:51 ?

Shirley James and her husband, Robert James, moved in 1971 to Savannah, Georgia, where she became a counselor at Savannah State College. Under the leadership of the university's president, Albert E. Manley, James founded a counseling center in 1972 with a Title III grant, and launched a successful peer counseling program. Former peer counselors included General Walter E. Gaskin and Gary D. Oliver, who succeeded James as supervisor of the program. At Savannah State College, James also acted as interim vice president of student affairs for one year, and directed the testing program for five years. In 1983, James assumed the role of owner and publisher of The Savannah Tribune, which her husband purchased in 1973. She retired from Savannah State College in 2002, and remained an active member of organizations like the Jack and Jill of America Foundation, Inc., the Junior League of Savannah and the graduate chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. James also shares her advice to future

generations.

Video Oral History Interview with Shirley James, Section A2007_013_001_005, TRT: 0:08:10 ?

Shirley James had three children with her husband, Robert James. Her oldest child, Robert James, II, was an attorney and a graduate of the Harvard Law School, as was his wife, Angela Payne James. James' older daughter, Anne James Gennaio, worked as an educator and a children's hospital administrator. James' youngest child, Rachelle James Gregory, graduated from Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, and became a marketing analyst at Turner Broadcasting System, Inc. At the time of the interview, James had two grandchildren, Lauren James and Abigail Gregory. She concludes the interview by describing her marriage to her husband, and how his support contributed to her accomplishments.