

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Emma E. Houston

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Houston, Emma E., 1956-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Emma E. Houston,
Dates:	March 16, 2008
Bulk Dates:	2008
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:04:37).
Abstract:	Nonprofit administrator Emma E. Houston (1956 -) served as Assistant Program Manager for the Salt Lake County Aging Services in the State of Utah. She was also the Director of Membership, as well as a sales specialist and Director of Girl Services for the Girl Scouts of Utah. Houston was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 16, 2008, in Salt Lake City, Utah. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2008_054
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Emma Elizabeth Roberson Houston was born on February 18, 1956 in Navasota, Texas to Ida and Norman Roberson. Houston attended Dallas' Albert Sidney Johnston Elementary School and Oliver Wendell Holmes Junior High School before moving with her family to Houston, Texas and graduating from Stephen F. Austin High School. Later, she earned her B.S. degree in business management from the University of Phoenix at Utah.

Houston has performed civic work in Salt Lake City, Utah for almost twenty years. In 1989, she was hired by the Girl Scouts of Utah and served as the director of membership until 1993. She eventually became the organization's sales specialist, instilling entrepreneurial values in high school age girls through training and leadership workshops. Houston then served as the director of girl services and provided supervision, support, training and direction to staff members and volunteers. She went on to work for Rowland Hall St. Mark's School as the diversity coordinator and at the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City, Utah, Houston served her hometown by helping to keep the Olympic Village secure.

Houston was hired by Salt Lake County Aging Services in 2002 as center supervisor and later became the organization's assistant program manager and the first in the State of Utah to facilitate a Senior Center receiving National Accreditation. Through her work, Houston helped to foster independence for the elderly by providing community-based services, in-home services and volunteer opportunities.

Houston, a breast cancer survivor, serves as a member of several institutions including the League of Black Women, the Salt Lake County Housing Authority, the Utah Gerontological Society and the Utah Commission on Women and Families. Houston has also served as the chair of the Governor's Office of Black Affairs and corresponding secretary for the NAACP.

Houston was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on March 16, 2008.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Emma E. Houston was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 16, 2008, in Salt Lake City, Utah, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Nonprofit administrator Emma E. Houston (1956 -) served as Assistant Program Manager for the Salt Lake County Aging Services in the State of Utah. She was also the Director of Membership, as well as a sales specialist and Director of Girl Services for the Girl Scouts of Utah.

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:

Houston, Emma E., 1956-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Houston, Emma E., 1956- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Nonprofit Administrator

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 Emma E. Houston, March 16, 2008. 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 Emma E. Houston, Section A2008_054_001_001, TRT: 0:27:03
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Emma E. Houston was born on February 18, 1956 in Navasota, Texas to Ida Green Childress and Norman Roberson, Sr. Her maternal great-grandmothers were Creole, and practiced voodoo. Houston's maternal grandfather was a Pullman porter, while her grandmother worked as a domestic. Houston's mother

was born in Broussard, Louisiana in 1936, and dropped out of high school after a white ophthalmologist misdiagnosed her with progressive blindness. Houston's paternal grandfather had African American and Irish ancestry, and worked on a cattle ranch in Texas. There, he met and married Houston's grandmother, who was black and Native American. They had fourteen children, including Houston's father, who was born in Navasota in 1934, and went on to become an electrical engineer. After moving to Dallas, Texas, he met Houston's mother, who was a resident of Houston, Texas. They married in 1954; and, when Houston was a few years old, relocated to Dallas' South Oak Cliff neighborhood.

Video Oral History Interview with Emma E. Houston, Section A2008_054_001_002, TRT: 0:28:36
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Emma E. Houston grew up in the majority-black Oak Cliff neighborhood of Dallas, Texas; and attended the Sweet Home Missionary Baptist Church in Garland, Texas. She rarely watched television; and, at Dallas' Albert Sidney Johnston Elementary School, developed her interests in reading, writing and history. She went on to attend Dallas' Oliver Wendell Holmes Junior High School and Franklin D. Roosevelt High School, where she joined the journalism club, Reserve Officers' Training Corps and cheerleading squad. The school integrated in 1972, while Houston was a student. Eventually, Houston's parents separated, and she moved with her mother to Houston, Texas. There, she graduated from Stephen F. Austin High School; and, in 1974, matriculated at the University of Houston, where she met Larry Houston, who played on the football team. They married in 1976, and relocated to Florida for his career at the Rockwell International Corporation. Ten years later, Houston and her husband moved to Utah.

Video Oral History Interview with Emma E. Houston, Section A2008_054_001_003, TRT: 0:30:23
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Emma E. Houston moved with her husband, Larry Houston, and two daughters to Salt Lake City, Utah in 1986. They joined Reverend France A. Davis' Calvary Baptist Church; and Salt Lake City's NAACP branch, which was directed by Alberta H. Henry. Houston began her involvement with the Girl Scouts of Utah as the leader of an all-black troop. She joined the Girl Scouts staff as a recruiter in 1989, and went on to manage the statewide Girl Scout cookie sale. She was then promoted to director of membership. In addition to her employment with the Girl Scouts, Houston worked as a pass administrator for the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. Eventually, Houston left the Girl Scouts to begin a career at the Salt Lake County Aging Services. She also served as the diversity coordinator at Salt Lake City's Rowland Hall-St. Mark's School, where she conducted cultural sensitivity training, and secured scholarships for black students. In 2005, Houston was diagnosed with stage four breast cancer.

Video Oral History Interview with Emma E. Houston, Section A2008_054_001_004, TRT: 0:26:43
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Emma E. Houston joined the staff of the Salt Lake County Aging Services in 2002; and, after five years, was promoted to assistant program manager. In this role, she supervised the seventeen senior centers in Salt Lake County. Houston also describes the senior center accreditation process, which she helped complete at the Sunday Anderson Westside Senior Center in 2007. During this time, Houston was diagnosed with stage four breast cancer, and underwent surgery, radiation and chemotherapy. At the time of the interview in 2008, her cancer was in complete remission. With her husband, Larry Houston, Houston had two daughters: Lorry Houston, an actress in South Carolina; and Erica

Houston Critchfield, an artist in Salt Lake City. She also remembers celebrating her siblings' fiftieth birthdays. Houston talks about her plans for the future; and reflects upon her legacy, her hopes for the African American community and how she would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Emma E. Houston, Section A2008_054_001_005, TRT: 0:11:52
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Emma E. Houston narrates her photographs.