

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Cassandra Newby-Alexander

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Newby-Alexander, Cassandra, 1957-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Cassandra Newby-Alexander,
Dates:	May 10, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:28:32).
Abstract:	History professor Cassandra Newby-Alexander (1957 -) taught African American history at Norfolk State University. She also wrote several books and created multimedia websites about segregation and the civil rights movement in Virginia. Newby-Alexander was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 10, 2010, in Norfolk, Virginia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_017
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Award-winning historian and author, Cassandra Newby-Alexander was born on December 30, 1957 in Great Lakes, Illinois. She attended Maury High School in Norfolk, Virginia and in 1980, she graduated with her B.A. degree in American government and African American studies from the University of Virginia. She went on to receive her professional teaching certificate from Norfolk State University in 1983, where she would later return to as an educator. That same year, she attended an international graduate summer school program at Oxford University. The following year, she completed her M.A. courses from Old Dominion University. In 1984, she was accepted into the Ph.D. program in history at the College of William and Mary, working as a graduate teaching assistant and earning a teaching fellowship. She received her Ph.D. in 1992. During that time, she also taught secondary school for Norfolk Public Schools in the subjects of AP history, psychology and foreign policy.

Newby-Alexander next became an assistant professor at Norfolk State University, teaching American Survey and Modern American and African American History. She also co-created televised courses for her classes. In 1995, she also became an educational consultant and annual contributor to Norfolk's Afr'Am Festival, one of the largest African American community celebrations on the East coast. From 1995 until 2000, Newby-Alexander served as an educational consultant with the ETS for American History. Since 2008, she has worked as an oral historian for the Supreme Court of Virginia, documenting the history of retired justices and lawyers in the twentieth century.

Newby-Alexander has co-authored several books including *Black America Series: Portsmouth* and her latest *Remembering School Desegregation in Hampton Roads, Virginia* in 2009. She also co-edited the book, *Voices from within the Veil: African Americans and the Experience of Democracy* in 2008. Also, she created the interactive websites *Waterways to Freedom* based on Virginia's Underground Railroad Network and *Race, Time, and Place* dedicated to African American history in Hampton Roads, Virginia. She has won multiple honors including in 2005 when she was chosen by American Legacy magazine as one of the nation's top teachers in African American history at a Historically Black College or University.

Cassandra Newby-Alexander was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 10, 2010.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Cassandra Newby-Alexander was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 10, 2010, in Norfolk, Virginia, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. History professor Cassandra Newby-Alexander (1957 -) taught African American history at Norfolk State University. She also wrote several books and created multimedia websites about segregation and the civil rights movement in Virginia.

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:

Newby-Alexander, Cassandra, 1957-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Newby-Alexander, Cassandra, 1957- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Norfolk State University

Occupations:

History Professor

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 Cassandra Newby-Alexander, May 10, 2010. 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 Cassandra Newby-Alexander, Section A2010_017_001_001, TRT: 0:30:40 ?

Cassandra Newby-Alexander was born on December 30, 1957 in Great Lakes, Illinois to Claytea Baker Newby and James Newby, Jr. Her maternal grandfather's ancestors were free blacks that lived with white plantation owners in Littleton, North Carolina, while her maternal grandmother, Carrie Rudd Baker, descended from free black landowners in Virginia. Her mother was educated in a one room schoolhouse and went on to become a teacher. Newby-Alexander's great-great grandfather was a descendant of President James Madison, Jr., and served as a missionary in Liberia in the 1850s. After his death in the 1870s, his family returned to Virginia, where her great-grandfather married teacher Ida Amos. They fled to Pennsylvania after being threatened by a lynch mob, but her grandmother, Emma Amos Newby, later returned to Virginia to attend Hampton Institute, and started a kindergarten at Bank Street Baptist Church in Norfolk. Her paternal grandfather, James Newby, Sr., was a respected carpenter from South Norfolk, Virginia.

Video Oral History Interview with Cassandra Newby-Alexander, Section A2010_017_001_002, TRT: 0:30:37 ?

Cassandra Newby-Alexander's father, James Newby, Jr., graduated from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and Howard University College of Medicine in Washington, D.C.; and met Newby-Alexander's mother, Claytea Baker Newby, while working at Croatan Beach in Virginia. After graduation, he practiced internal medicine in Norfolk, Virginia. Early on, she was encouraged by her parents to read, and was aware of political events like the death of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy and the election of President Lyndon Baines Johnson. After she was almost struck by lightning as a child, Newby-Alexander decided to live for a greater purpose. Newby-Alexander grew up in the Villa Heights neighborhood of Norfolk, and started kindergarten at Bank Street Memorial Baptist Church, where she was taught by her paternal grandmother, Emma Amos Newby. She then attended the all-black Lindenwood Elementary School, where Kathryn Brown Bibbins served as principal. At home and school, Newby-Alexander was taught to strive for excellence.

Video Oral History Interview with Cassandra Newby-Alexander, Section A2010_017_001_003, TRT: 0:30:05 ?

Cassandra Newby-Alexander was one of the forty African American students bused to Sherwood Forest Elementary School in Norfolk, Virginia in 1970. Even though she and two other students had the highest grades, their achievements were never recognized by their teacher. After a transfer student referred to one of the black students in a derogatory way, the student hit him. She was supported by white and black students alike, and the boy left the school. Although teachers attempted to intimidate the students, Newby-Alexander and her peers defended themselves and each other. When her family moved to a predominately white neighborhood, she enrolled at Willard Junior High School, where she was active in the student government. She then attended Matthew Fontaine Maury High School, where her ethnic history class teacher, Robert Davenport, introduced her to African American authors and local history. Upon graduating in 1976, she matriculated at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, intending to study law.

Video Oral History Interview with Cassandra Newby-Alexander, Section A2010_017_001_004, TRT: 0:29:45 ?

Cassandra Newby-Alexander matriculated at the University of Virginia in 1976, where she encountered explicit racism and sexism. One professor feared the African American students, and, despite their protests, Dean Edwin E. Floyd refused to hire additional black faculty. Newby-Alexander double majored in

American government and African American studies, and studied under Larry J. Sabato and Charles L. Perdue. After receiving her diploma in 1980, she worked as a paralegal for the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law in Washington, D.C. Afterward, she returned to Norfolk, Virginia, where she became a substitute teacher, and completed her teaching certification. Newby-Alexander then entered a master's degree program in history at Old Dominion University. During her final year, Newby-Alexander was accepted into their Ph.D. program, despite her late application. For one summer, she studied at Exeter College in Oxford, England, where she confronted a tutor after he made a racist remark toward her.

Video Oral History Interview with Cassandra Newby-Alexander, Section A2010_017_001_005, TRT: 0:32:10 ?

Cassandra Newby-Alexander completed her Ph.D. degree at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. She wrote her dissertation on the African American community in Norfolk from 1861 to 1864, using census data and texts recommended by her advisor, Martin Boyd Coyner, Jr. She discovered that the disparate elements of black life in Virginia often made researching the African American community more difficult. She also researched government funded communities in the state after World War I. After teaching in Norfolk public schools for four years, Newby-Alexander joined the history department at Norfolk State University in Virginia in 1992. In 1994, Newby-Alexander consulted on the Henrietta Marie exhibit at Norfolk's Nauticus museum with other Virginia historians, and interviewed with Ray Suarez of National Public Radio. At the time of the interview, Newby-Alexander was researching the Underground Railroad, including the lives of men who escaped slavery like George Latimer and Sheridan W. Ford.

Video Oral History Interview with Cassandra Newby-Alexander, Section A2010_017_001_006, TRT: 0:34:58 ?

Cassandra Newby-Alexander worked to communicate the complexity of the Transatlantic Slave Trade when she consulted for the Henrietta Marie slave ship exhibition at the Nauticus museum in Norfolk, Virginia. In teaching history at Norfolk State University in Virginia, Newby-Alexander sought to show connections between historical and contemporary beliefs and actions. Newby-Alexander researched and taught local history, and the students in her African American history courses were often surprised they did not already know the information. She also launched the website Race, Time, and Place: African Americans in Tidewater, Virginia to educate people about Virginian history. For her work, she was featured in the American Legacy Museum. Newby-Alexander also talks about her admiration for historian John Hope Franklin, and describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Cassandra Newby-Alexander, Section A2010_017_001_007, TRT: 0:20:17 ?

Cassandra Newby-Alexander met her husband, William Alexander, while teaching at Norfolk State University. He was her department chair, but resigned from that position when they married, and they continued to work together on various projects. Newby-Alexander reflects upon the role of the black church, her life and her legacy. She shares her hopes for American society, and concludes the interview by describing how she would like to be remembered.