

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dolly Adams

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Adams, Dolly Desselle, 1931-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dolly Adams,
Dates:	December 13, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:54:33).
Abstract:	Educator and nonprofit chief executive Dolly Adams (1931 -) served as the national president of The Links and the Black Women's Agenda. Adams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 13, 2012, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_246
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Nonprofit executive Dolly Desselle Adams was born in Marksville, Louisiana on August 13, 1931, the only child of Moses J. Following her graduation from of Xavier University Preparatory High School in New Orleans, Adams enrolled at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where she received her B.S. degree. Adams went on to earn her M.A. degree in education from the University of Michigan, and her Ph.D degree in education from Baylor University.

As an educator, Adams has held a variety of positions, including elementary school teacher and administrator; college dean and Professor at the University of Michigan, Wilberforce University, Albany State College, Paul Quinn College, and Howard University School of Law. Adams last served as an adjunct professor at the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta, Georgia. She has also held outstanding leadership positions in community service organizations. Her role as Episcopal Supervisor of the Women's Missionary Society (WMS) and the Ministers' Wives of the Tenth (Texas), Second (Mid-Atlantic States), Sixth (Georgia) and Seventh (South Carolina) and Eleventh (Florida and Bahamas) Episcopal Districts covered a span of 32 years. Adams served for four years as National President of The Links, Inc., and The Links Foundation, Inc., and five years as National President of the Black Women's Agenda, Inc. In addition, Adams served on the board of directors of the United Negro College Fund, Paul Quinn College Foundation, the Southern University Foundation and the sisters of Charity Foundation. Adams now serves on the Board of Directors of the Black Women's Agenda, Inc., the WMS Foundation and the Links, Inc.

From 1982-86, Adams was cited as one of the "100 Most Influential Black Americans" by *Ebony Magazine*, and *Dollars & Sense Magazine* named her as one of the "Top 100 Black Business and Professional Women" 1986 and 1987. Adams is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and the N.A.A.C.P. In recognition of her services in South Carolina, the Governor presented to her the Order of the Palmetto, the highest citation given by the State to a citizen.

Adams and her husband, Reverend John Hurst Adams, live in Atlanta, Georgia. They are the parents of three successful daughters: Attorney Gaye Adams Massey, Dr. Jann Adams, and Madelyn R. Adams

Dolly Desselle Adams was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on December 13, 2012.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dolly Adams was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 13, 2012, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Educator and nonprofit chief executive Dolly Adams (1931 -) served as the national president of The Links and the Black Women's Agenda.

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:

Adams, Dolly Desselle, 1931-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

Adams, Dolly Desselle, 1931- --Interviews

African Americans--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Nonprofit Chief Executive

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 Dolly Adams, December 13, 2012. 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 Dolly Adams, Section A2012_246_001_001, TRT: 1:29:16 ?

Dolly Adams was born on August 18, 1931 in Marksville, Louisiana to Thelma Tucker Smith and Moses Desselle. Her paternal grandfather, Alzide Desselle, had French Canadian heritage, and her grandmother, Irene Barbin Desselle, was

Native American and African American. Adams' maternal grandfather, Albert Tucker, was the enslaved son of a white landowner, and inherited several acres of land. Her mother attended Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and earned master's degrees from Xavier University and Northwestern University. Her best friend was Daisy Fuller Young; and, as a girl, Adams often played with Young's sons, future civil rights activists Andrew Young and Walter Young. Adams began her education at a catholic school in Marksville, and transferred to the Southern University Laboratory School during the third grade, when her family moved to Baton Rouge. After her father's death in 1945, Adams moved with her mother to New Orleans, where she graduated from the Xavier University Preparatory School.

Video Oral History Interview with Dolly Adams, Section A2012_246_001_002, TRT: 2:28:18 ?

Dolly Adams moved with her mother, Thelma Tucker Smith, to New Orleans, Louisiana at thirteen years old. She graduated from the Xavier University Preparatory School the following year, and enrolled at Southern University, where she met Morehouse College President Benjamin Mays. Adams aspired to become a teacher, and was mentored by Professor Julia Purnell. Upon graduating in 1951, she briefly taught public school, and then pursued a master's degree in educational administration at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Her tuition was funded by the State of Louisiana, which offered grants to African Americans in order to maintain segregation at Louisiana State University. At the University of Michigan, black students were barred from the campus dormitories, so Adams lived in the student co-ops. Upon graduating, she taught for one year at the university's Neuropsychiatric Institute. Then, Adams was recruited to join the education department at Wilberforce University in Wilberforce, Ohio.

Video Oral History Interview with Dolly Adams, Section A2012_246_001_003, TRT: 3:29:27 ?

Dolly Adams joined the faculty of Wilberforce University in 1953. There, she met her husband, Bishop John Hurst Adams, who was teaching at Payne Theological Seminary. He was a graduate of Johnson C. Smith University, and attended Boston University with Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. before to coming to Ohio. The couple married in 1956, and moved to Waco, Texas, where Bishop Adams became the president of Paul Quinn College. Adams was named the dean of students, and joined a student protest against employment discrimination at a local store. The demonstration ultimately led to the desegregation of downtown Waco. After six years, Adams moved with her family to Seattle, Washington, where her husband pastored the First African Methodist Episcopal Church. There, she created a daycare and directed the Head Start program. She also continued her civil rights activism; and, after several threats against her, the members of the nascent Black Panther Party chapter began serving as her bodyguards.

Video Oral History Interview with Dolly Adams, Section A2012_246_001_004, TRT: 4:31:06 ?

Dolly Adams joined The Links while living in Seattle, Washington. The organization was founded with the aim of exposing African American children to the fine arts. Adams continued to serve the needs of the black community after moving with her husband to Los Angeles, California in 1965. He was called to pastor the Grant A.M.E. Church in Watts, and they moved one week after the Watts riots. At the church, Adams founded a Saturday morning school with a black history curriculum. In 1972, her husband was elected as a bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal church, and the family returned to Waco, Texas, where he also served as chairman of the board of the Paul Quinn College. As the wife of a bishop, Adams took on additional responsibilities, such as

supervising the Women's Missionary Society. She was mentored by Artishia Wilkerson Jordan and Edith May Primm, the wives of Bishop Frederick Jordan and Bishop Howard Thomas Primm. In 1979, Adams completed a doctoral degree in education at Waco's Baylor University.

Video Oral History Interview with Dolly Adams, Section A2012_246_001_005, TRT: 5:29:21 ?

Dolly Adams taught several classes at Paul Quinn College while living in Waco, Texas. In 1980, she moved to Washington, D.C., where she taught communication skills as a visiting professor at the Howard University School of Law for eight years. Adams continued her participation in The Links, and became the organization's national president in 1982. During her tenure, she created The Links Foundation; and, in 1985, led a delegation to the International Women's Year celebration in Nairobi, Kenya. There, she met actress Etta Moten Barnett and former U.S. Representative Bella Abzug. In 1988, Adams and her husband moved to Atlanta, Georgia, where she worked at the Interdisciplinary Theological Center. Two years later, she published 'She in the Glass House: A Handbook for African Methodist Episcopal Church Minister's Wives and Widows.' In 1992, they moved to Columbia, South Carolina, where they remained until 2000, when Adams' husband was assigned to serve as bishop in Florida.

Video Oral History Interview with Dolly Adams, Section A2012_246_001_006, TRT: 6:27:05 ?

Dolly Adams joined the Black Women's Agenda in 1986. The group was formed in 1977, after black women were excluded from the planning of the first International Woman's Year. Adams served as president of the organization and chairwoman of the group's annual luncheon in Washington, D.C. for six years. After moving to South Carolina, Adams worked with the Reid House of Christian Services, a social service agency in Charleston, South Carolina; and the McClendon County Health Services, which was the first black-run adoption center in the state. In 2000, Adams and her husband moved to Jacksonville, Florida, where she established three annual workshops through her church. After four years, Adams and her husband retired and returned to Atlanta, Georgia, where she continued her work with The Links and the Black Women's Agenda. Adams describes her concerns for the African American community, and reflects upon her legacy and how she would like to be remembered. She concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.