

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Joan Small

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Small, Joan F., 1941-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Joan Small,
Dates:	August 21, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:45:18).
Abstract:	City government official Joan Small (1941 - 2020) served as the Director of Development for the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs, and as First Deputy Commissioner of the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. Small was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 21, 2013, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_217
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Commissioner Joan F. Small was born on September 12, 1941 in Chicago, Illinois. She attended the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana for three years before transferring to Roosevelt University where she received her B.A. degree in psychology and social work in 1964.

Small was employed by the Cook County Department of Public Aid in 1964 as a caseworker where she worked in public housing at the Robert Taylor Homes. In 1969, Small became a member of the administrative staff of Metropolitan Family Services (originally the United Charities of Chicago). Small played a key role in the expansion and implementation of Metropolitan Family Services' development program. She was hired by the City of Chicago in 1987 as the director of development for the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. In that role, she organized and implemented various fund-raising campaigns. She also developed marketing strategies and established sponsorships with corporate partners and local cultural institutions and arts agencies. In 1988, Small was appointed as the First Deputy Commissioner for the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs by Mayor Richard M. Daley. Over the sixteen years she held that position, she managed the daily operations of the department. With a staff of 160 employees and an annual budget of \$16.4 million, Small oversaw most program divisions and administrative activities, including grants, visual arts, performing arts, public art, cultural tourism, fundraising, the Chicago Sister Cities International Program and other international projects. Small developed and implemented programming, personnel procedures and oversight for the department's seven non-profit entities. She also served as the department liaison to the mayor's office for key governmental functions and legislative issues.

Small has been active in various local and national non-profit organizations. These include serving as a director of Americans for the Arts for twelve years and chair of the Leadership Advisory Committee of The Art Institute of Chicago. Small also served as a member for Know Your Chicago, the Chicago Chapter of The Links Inc, Chicago Chapter, National Smart Set, and The Friday Club. Previous board affiliations include the Alliance Franchise of Chicago; the Chicago Chapter of the National Conference of Community and Justice (formally National

Conference of Christians and Jews); the women's board of The Goodman Theatre; the International Visitors Center of Chicago; the Advisory Board of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; and the Women's Board, Metropolitan Family Services.

Commissioner Joan F. Small was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 21, 2013.

Small passed away on June 24, 2020.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Joan Small was conducted by Thomas Jefferson on August 21, 2013, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. City government official Joan Small (1941 - 2020) served as the Director of Development for the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs, and as First Deputy Commissioner of the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs.

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:

Small, Joan F., 1941-

Jefferson, Thomas (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Small, Joan F., 1941- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

City Government Official

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 Joan Small, August 21, 2013. 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 Joan Small, Section A2013_217_001_001, TRT: 1:29:56 ?

Joan Small was born on September 12, 1941 in Chicago, Illinois to Ella Peters Flemings and Amos Flemings. Small's maternal ancestor, Ruth Perteet, was the white daughter of a slaveholding family in Georgia. With an unknown slave, she had Small's great-great-grandfather, Solomon Perteet. At eighteen years old, he was sent to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, so that his mother could marry a white man. There, he became a successful entrepreneur who freed many slaves. Small's maternal grandmother, Athelstan Carter Peters, was born to Sarah Perteet Carter and William Carter, Sr. She went on to graduate from Wilberforce University in Ohio, and married Charles Peters, Sr., who owned a general store, life insurance agency and property in Mobile, Alabama. Small's mother was nine years old when her mother died from tuberculosis. From that point, she was raised by her aunt, Eunita Peters Taylor, and uncle, physician John Taylor. She later studied to become a teacher at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia.

Video Oral History Interview with Joan Small, Section A2013_217_001_002, TRT: 2:30:53 ?

Joan Small's maternal great-great-uncle, Wilson Ruffin Abbott, emigrated from Tuscaloosa, Alabama to Toronto, Canada, where his son, Anderson Ruffin Abbott, became the first African Canadian to graduate from the Toronto School of Medicine. His descendants married into white families, eventually identifying as white themselves. After the death of his mother, Louella Flemings Pruitt, Small's father, Amos Flemings, moved to Mobile, Alabama at ten years old. He became a skilled bridge player, competing in tournaments nationwide. He met and married Ella Peters Flemings, who was the first woman to win a tournament with the American Bridge Association, and the two moved to Chicago, Illinois to raise their family. Small's father became a labor unionizer with United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America before working as a laborer for General Motors Corporation, where he continued to advocate for workers' rights. Small attended Austin O. Sexton Elementary School and Hirsch High School.

Video Oral History Interview with Joan Small, Section A2013_217_001_003, TRT: 3:28:44 ?

Joan Small began her education at Austin O. Sexton Elementary School in Chicago, Illinois, where she was taught by Madeline Stratton Morris. After her family's move to Chicago's Chatham neighborhood, Small enrolled at Hirsch High School, where she faced discrimination from her teachers and peers. Nevertheless, she joined the Future Teachers of America, and was inducted into the National Honors Society. In January of 1959, Small entered the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, but transferred to Roosevelt University in Chicago for her final year. There, she met her future husband, Lynn Small, a political science graduate student who had studied at the University of Chicago. Upon graduating, Small became a social worker for the Cook County Department of Public Aid, where she was assigned to the Robert Taylor Homes housing project. She talks about the drawbacks of the Robert Taylor Homes, including the de facto segregation of its African American residents from the white neighborhoods.

Video Oral History Interview with Joan Small, Section A2013_217_001_004, TRT: 4:28:28 ?

Joan Small left the Cook County Department of Public Aid in Chicago, Illinois to become an intake social worker at the United Charities of Chicago. She was first positioned at the Woodlawn Social Services Center; and in 1975, was encouraged by development director, John D. Purdy, to transition to the development fundraising department in the downtown office. She focused on building a rapport with major local corporations, such as United Airlines, Inc. and the First National Bank of Chicago. She also worked with development consultant Charles Feldstein, who recommended her to Joan W. Harris,

commissioner of the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. At the time, Harris was establishing the development branch of the department, and hired Small, after being impressed by her volunteer work with Margaret Burroughs at the Dusable Musuem of African American History. Shortly after Small's arrival in 1988, Harris was replaced by Lois Weisberg, who previously headed the city's Office of Special Events.

Video Oral History Interview with Joan Small, Section A2013_217_001_005, TRT: 5:29:49 ?

Joan Small served as deputy commissioner for the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs for sixteen years. The department, which operated out of the Chicago Cultural Center in Chicago, Illinois, thrived with the support of Mayor Richard M. Daley and his wife, Maggie Daley. During her tenure, Small oversaw Chicago CityArts, a grant program that provided resources for not-for-profit private agencies based on their annual budget, thus allocating more funds to smaller organizations rather than well-known museums. To supplement their own budget, the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs rented out the Chicago Cultural Center for fundraising events. Small also increased Chicago's participation in Sister Cities International, which fostered community and business relations in regions like Europe, Asia and Africa. Throughout her career, Small maintained her values, ensuring no one was given preferential treatment. In her spare time, she served as president of the U.S. Urban Arts Federation.

Video Oral History Interview with Joan Small, Section A2013_217_001_006, TRT: 6:17:28 ?

Joan Small retired from the City of Chicago Cultural Affairs Department in 2004. During her time as deputy commissioner, she assisted in the development of the Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concerts and other exhibition program at the Chicago Cultural Center in Chicago, Illinois. Small also helped to establish summer dance programs and Gallery 37, a young adult job training program that was sponsored by companies like United Airlines, Inc., First National Bank of Chicago and Exelon Corporation. Organizations such as the Black Ensemble Theater, the Mexican Fine Arts Center and Museum and the Chicago Gay Men's Chorus also benefited from grants awarded by the Chicago CityArts program. Small talks about attending the renaming ceremony of Muriel Williams Battle High School in Columbia, Missouri, which was dedicated to her maternal first cousin's wife. Small also reflects upon the current state of Chicago's arts community and her legacy.