

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Josie Childs

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Childs, Josie, 1926-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Josie Childs,
Dates:	August 24, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:10:32).
Abstract:	Community activist Josie Childs (1926 -) worked for Chicago City Hall for a number of years. She also aided former Chicago Mayor Harold Washington during his 1977 and 1983 mayoral campaigns, and later co-founded the Harold Washington Tribute Committee. Childs was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 24, 2013, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_248
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Community activist Josie Childs was born on October 13, 1926, in Clarksdale, Mississippi to Julia Brown and Charles Washington, a dentist. Although born in Clarksdale, Childs grew up in Memphis, Tennessee and Vicksburg, Mississippi. Her grandfather was a successful landowner and professor, and Childs' grandmother was a school teacher. She attended elementary school and high school in both Memphis and Vicksburg. Childs went on to attend LeMoyne-Owen College in Memphis, and then took classes at the Cortez W. Peters Business College. She also studied at Northwestern University in Chicago, where she took business courses in the late 1940s.

Childs was employed with the City of Chicago, first under sponsorship from Bob Miller in the Sixth Ward, and then under Colonel Jack Riley as an events coordinator in the 1950s. She also served as an administrator at the Metropolitan School of Tailoring. Childs went on to work with former Chicago Mayor Harold Washington on his 1977 and 1983 mayoral campaigns. She was also Mayor Washington's aide for many years. Childs then worked at City Hall as an administrator in the City of Chicago's Special Events and Cultural Affairs departments from 1983 until 1990. Following her work with the City of Chicago, she went on to create and promote various events, including an acknowledgement event for Great Lakes African American naval musicians.

Childs was the founder of the 2013 Harold Washington Tribute Committee, and has worked to ensure the continued legacy of Chicago's first African American Mayor, Harold Washington. She has been a member of many organizations, including the Duke Ellington Society, Joint Negro Appeal, Know Your Chicago, Executive Service Corps., and Friends of the Chicago Public Library. She sat on the boards of the National Council for Lay Life and Work and the Christ Hospital Nursing School. Childs received the Georgia Palmer Award from Congressman Danny K. Davis in 2013. She has also donated the "Josie Brown Childs Papers," a collection of documents consisting of family history, her political work, and her efforts to promote African American cultural and historical awareness, to the Chicago Public Library.

Josie Childs was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 24, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Josie Childs was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 24, 2013, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Community activist Josie Childs (1926 -) worked for Chicago City Hall for a number of years. She also aided former Chicago Mayor Harold Washington during his 1977 and 1983 mayoral campaigns, and later co-founded the Harold Washington Tribute Committee.

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:

Childs, Josie, 1926-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Childs, Josie, 1926- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Community Activist

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 Josie Childs, August 24, 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 Josie Childs, Section A2013_248_001_001, TRT: 1:28:24 ?

Josie Childs was born on October 13, 1926 in Clarksdale, Mississippi to Julia Brown Ryan and Charles Washington. Her maternal grandfather, Albert Brown, graduated from Rust College in Holly Springs, Mississippi in 1895. He became a professor and entrepreneur, and married schoolteacher Lillie Brown. They had a prosperous farm near Vicksburg, Mississippi, where Childs' mother, Julia

Brown Ryan, was born around 1905. She also attended Rust College, and briefly worked as a teacher. She separated from Childs' father, dentist Charles Washington, before Childs' birth, and married Childs' stepfather Edward Ryan a few years later. At three years old, Childs went to live with her maternal grandparents outside of Vicksburg, where she attended Magnolia Avenue High School for elementary school and Cherry Street School for the sixth and seventh grades. She then lived in Memphis for two years, where she attended Booker T. Washington High School before returning to Vicksburg to graduate from Magnolia Avenue High School.

Video Oral History Interview with Josie Childs, Section A2013_248_001_002, TRT: 2:29:04 ?

Josie Childs spent much of her childhood living with her maternal grandparents, Albert Brown and Lillie Brown, on their farm near Vicksburg, Mississippi. There, she helped in the fields, fished and cared for the farm animals. She attended services and revivals with her extended family at Lynch's chapel, a small church built on her grandfather's land. Childs excelled academically, specifically in her drama, reading and math classes. Upon graduating from Magnolia Avenue High School in Vicksburg in 1943, she studied business administration at LeMoyne College in Memphis, Tennessee. A few years later, Childs moved to Chicago, Illinois, where she worked for Operation PUSH director Celious Henderson at the Metropolitan School of Tailoring, which occupied a building owned by businessman Herman Hartman. During this time, Childs befriended his daughter, Hermene Hartman. Childs studied accounting at Cortez W. Peters Business College and Northwestern University; and joined a fishing and hunting club in her spare time.

Video Oral History Interview with Josie Childs, Section A2013_248_001_003, TRT: 3:29:19 ?

Josie Childs moved to Chicago, Illinois during the 1950s, and worked intermittently in a hotel and restaurant across the Club DeLisa. She also became a charter member of the Congregational Church of Park Manor in 1953. In 1956, Childs began working in Chicago's 6th Ward under Alderman Robert Miller. In this role, she helped lawyer Edith Sampson to organize a rally for Adlai Stevenson II's presidential campaign. Childs' also worked with Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley's aide, Jack Riley, to host Ghana President Kwame Nkrumah and Queen Elizabeth II during the 1959 Pan American games. Subsequently, Riley, Childs and others established the Mayor's Office of Special Events. As the only African American city hall employee, Childs was sent to meetings regarding the civil rights marches, where she first learned of the sentencing for arrested protesters. To support the movement, she resigned from city hall. Childs recalls meeting her husband James Childs, Sr. through community activist Juanita Passmore.

Video Oral History Interview with Josie Childs, Section A2013_248_001_004, TRT: 4:28:25 ?

Josie Childs became increasingly involved in Chicago politics during the 1960s. Through the 3rd Ward Young Democrats, Childs became familiar with influential community leaders like John Stroger, Jr., Charles Freeman, Kenneth Wilson, Samuel Patch, Clifford Kelley and Cecil Partee. She also met U.S. House Representative William L. Dawson while working to support local politicians in the 1964 at large elections for Illinois state representatives. Through her civic involvements, she often encountered the Silent Six aldermen of Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley's administration: William Harvey, Claude Holman, Ralph Metcalfe, Robert Miller, Kenneth Campbell and Benjamin Lewis. Following the death of Richard J. Daley in 1976, Harold Washington decided to run for mayor in 1977. Childs supported this campaign as well as his 1980 campaign for U.S. House of Representatives, working with book publisher

Bennett Johnson and Gus Savage, who served as his campaign manager. Childs recalls marrying James Childs, Sr. in 1969.

Video Oral History Interview with Josie Childs, Section A2013_248_001_005, TRT: 5:30:15 ?

Josie Childs met Congressman John Conyers, Jr. while supporting Ralph Metcalfe's congressional campaign in 1978. She worked with Harold Washington during his U.S. House of Representatives run in 1980, and anticipated going with him to Washington, D.C.; but due to miscommunication, was never offered a job there. In 1983, Washington reluctantly returned to Chicago, Illinois to run for mayor, following the plebiscite organized by Jorja Palmer and Lutrelle "Lu" F. Palmer, II. Childs supported this campaign as well, alongside many local leaders like businessman Edward Gardner, who donated his radio advertising slots; and historian Timuel Black, who was the chairman of the voter registration drive sponsored by the Chicago Pan Hellenic Council. Childs remembers the loyalty of Washington's grassroots supporters, and his relationship with his aide Clarence McClain, and rivalry with former city council president Edward Vrdolyak. She also reflects on the fragmentation of Washington's coalition following his death.

Video Oral History Interview with Josie Childs, Section A2013_248_001_006, TRT: 6:28:43 ?

Josie Childs worked in the Chicago Mayor's Office of Special Events under Richard J. Daley, Harold Washington, Eugene Sawyer and Richard M. Daley. She organized the first Sharing It program with the Greater Chicago Food Depository, and received assistance from James W. Bidwell and radio personality Wesley South. After a disagreement with director Lois Weisberg, she was transferred to the Department of Cultural Affairs, where she worked under Joan W. Harris until Harris was replaced by Weisberg, who fired Childs in 1990. She then became an event planner, organizing the fortieth anniversary celebration of The Congregational Church of Park Manor, which featured speakers like civil rights leaders Dorothy Height and Andrew Young. She also coordinated the 1999 International Duke Ellington Conference and the Great Lakes Experience concert with Clark Terry, Claude Walton, Samuel Floyd. At the time of the interview, she was involved with the Mikva Challenge and the Harold Washington Tribute Committee.

Video Oral History Interview with Josie Childs, Section A2013_248_001_007, TRT: 7:16:22 ?

Josie Childs remained involved with the Harold Washington Tribute Committee as it transitioned into the Harold Washington Legacy Committee, a full-fledged organization focused on upholding his legacy with ongoing political and educational projects. She formed a program for the organization to donate educational resources to one student from Chicago State University and each of the City Colleges of Chicago. For her civic engagement, she was honored with the Jorja Palmer Award, presented to her by Congressman Danny K. Davis. Childs talks about her event planning career, and her hopes and concerns for the African American community. She concludes the interview by reflecting upon her life, legacy and health, and how she would like to be remembered.