

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Mary Flowers

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Flowers, Mary Evelyn, 1951-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Mary Flowers,
Dates:	August 11, 2000
Bulk Dates:	2000
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:00:08).
Abstract:	State representative The Honorable Mary Flowers (1951 -) started her career in politics as a volunteer for Harold Washington's mayoral campaign and was subsequently elected to the Illinois House of Representatives in 1985. Flowers represents the 31st District in Chicago focusing on health care and children's rights legislation, including the Illinois Managed Care Act. Flowers was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 11, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2000_050
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Mary Evelyn Flowers was born on July 31, 1951, in Inverness, Mississippi. As a child, she moved with her family to Chicago, Illinois, where she attended Simeon High School. Upon graduation in 1970, Flowers enrolled at Kennedy-King College in Chicago before transferring to the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle Campus. After receiving her degree, Flowers held a series of positions with her alma mater before assuming the position of Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs, which she held from 1977 to 1979.

Flowers' career in politics began as a volunteer for the mayoral campaign of Harold Washington. In 1985, she was elected to the Illinois House of Representatives from Chicago's 31st District. As a member of the state legislature, Flowers has been instrumental in passing considerable health care and children's rights legislation. She also sponsored the Illinois Managed Care Act, which was signed into law.

Flowers spearheaded the renaming of the Calumet Expressway after Bishop Louis Henry Ford, making the Bishop Ford Highway the first expressway to be named after an African American. She has sponsored legislation to keep public pension funds from being invested in apartheid-era South Africa as well as legislation requiring sensitivity training for police officers in Illinois. Flowers served as Chairperson for the Committee On Health Care Availability and Access.

Married to Daniel Coutee, Flowers is the mother of one daughter, Makeda. She was the recipient of several award and honors, including "Legislator of the Year" from the Community Behavior Healthcare Association of Illinois and the "Legislative Appreciation Award" bestowed by the Chicago Teachers Union.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Mary Flowers was conducted by Adele Hodge on August 11, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. State representative The Honorable Mary Flowers (1951 -) started her career in politics as a volunteer for Harold Washington's mayoral campaign and was subsequently elected to the Illinois House of Representatives in 1985. Flowers represents the 31st District in Chicago focusing on health care and children's rights legislation, including the Illinois Managed Care Act.

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:

Flowers, Mary Evelyn, 1951-

Hodge, Adele (Interviewer)

Haynes, Frank (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Flowers, Mary Evelyn, 1951---Interviews

African American legislators--Illinois--Interviews.

State governments--Officials and employees--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Illinois

Occupations:

State Representative

HistoryMakers® Category:

PoliticalMakers

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 The Honorable Mary Flowers, August 11, 2000. 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 The Honorable Mary Flowers, Section A2000_050_001_001,
TRT: 0:29:36 ?

Mary Flowers was born on July 31, 1951, the second oldest of seven children to Lula Mary Harper Flowers and Willie Wiggin Flowers in Inverness, Mississippi. When she was three years old, Flowers and her family moved to Chicago; her parents separated when she was young and she was raised by her mother. Flowers attended several Catholic grade schools and then Simeon Vocational High School, graduating from there in 1971. She describes her aspirations as a youth and talks about her mother and the women in her family who influenced her. She described her neighborhood in the 1960s, Martin Luther King's protest about Chicago's segregated school system under Superintendent Benjamin Willis in 1965, and the Reverend Jesse Jackson's protest of the Sears Tower. African American legislators--Illinois--Interviews.
State governments--Officials and employees--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Mary Flowers, Section A2000_050_001_002,
TRT: 0:30:25 ?

Mary Flowers talks about the responsibilities she had as a child, including her duties helping her younger siblings. Her interests included dancing and roller skating. Working throughout high school and college to help her mother, Flowers felt like an outsider at Kennedy-King College in Chicago, and lacked confidence as a student. Flowers talks about her marriage to her long-time boyfriend, Dan Coutee, after the birth of their daughter, Makeda, in 1991. Flowers describes her entry into politics and her relationship with Mayor Harold Washington. When asked to run for the Illinois General Assembly in 1983, she said yes. In the interview, she describes her campaign and election, and talks about her early years in the Illinois General Assembly.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Mary Flowers, Section A2000_050_001_003,
TRT: 0:29:27 ?

Mary Flowers talks about her first bill in the Illinois General Assembly, the "Kids Initiative 95", in order to advocate for daycare in Illinois schools. This bill led to the overhauling of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Flowers then describes Illinois House Bill 626, the Illinois Managed Care Act of 1999, and the successful passage of the bill in the House, even though it was later stalled in the Illinois Senate. While describing Illinois' African American politicians, Flowers reflects on institutionalized racism and what has changed during her career. She then talks about her passion for the political process.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Mary Flowers, Section A2000_050_001_004,
TRT: 0:30:40 ?

Mary Flowers talks about her legacy and how she wants to be remembered. She describes her family and how political life affected her husband and daughter. She is grateful for her husband's support and for the opportunities she gave her daughter. Flowers describes her philosophical approach to politics, her values, and her commitment to service. Flowers then narrates her photographs.