

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Laura Murphy

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Murphy, Laura W., 1955-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Laura Murphy,
<b>Dates:</b>	January 18, 2001
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2001
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:18:31).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Nonprofit chief executive Laura Murphy (1955 - ) is the director of the ACLU's Washington, D.C., office. Under Murphy's leadership, the ACLU Washington office has been instrumental in the passage of such legislation as: the Family Medical Leave Act, the Motor Voter Bill, the Freedom of Access to Clinics Act, and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Murphy and the Washington ACLU office have been praised by Democratic and Republican members of Congress. Murphy was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 18, 2001, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2001_051
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Nonprofit chief executive Laura W. Murphy was born on October 3, 1955, in Baltimore, Maryland. As the daughter of Judge William H. and Madeline Murphy, she grew up an active member of Baltimore's Cherry Hill neighborhood. Murphy attended Wellesley College, obtaining her B.A. degree in 1976.

Upon graduation, Murphy joined the staff of Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, thus beginning her career in politics. From 1979 to 1982, she worked as a registered lobbyist for the American Civil Liberties Union. In this position, Murphy lobbied members of Congress, delivered testimony before congressional committees and conducted press briefings on pending legislation.

Murphy moved to Los Angeles in 1982 and became director of development and planned giving for the ACLU Foundation of Southern California. The Foundation exceeded previous fundraising goals during her tenure. Murphy left the ACLU in 1985 to work as an account executive at a public affairs consulting firm and then as chief of staff for California Assembly Speaker Willie Brown. Murphy returned to the East Coast in 1991 and joined the staff of Washington, D.C. Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly as special assistant for tourism. Murphy suggested the creation of the Office of Tourism and Promotions in the District of Columbia and became director of the office. Under Murphy's leadership, the office was successful in increasing advertising revenue for tourism and winning two major international sporting events for the District, World Cup soccer and the Tour DuPont international bicycle race.

In 1993, Murphy returned to the ACLU as director of its Washington Office. Murphy became the first woman and first African American to be the ACLU's chief liaison to the White House and Congress. Under Murphy's

leadership, the ACLU Washington office was instrumental in the passage of such legislation as the Family Medical Leave Act, the Motor Voter Bill, the Freedom of Access to Clinics Act and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Murphy and the Washington ACLU office were praised by Democratic and Republican members of Congress for their success in organizing coalitions of groups representing opposing parties and ideologies. Murphy stepped down as director in 2005 to establish Laura Murphy & Associates, a private consulting firm. She was later renamed director of the ACLU's Washington Office in 2010, and again stepped down in January of 2015.

Murphy has received numerous awards and recognition, including the 1994 Distinguished Public Service Award from the District of Columbia and the Congressional Black Caucus 1997 William L. Dawson Award. In 1998, Murphy was named one of the fifty most influential Washingtonians in Congressional politics by *Roll Call*. Murphy is on the board of directors of the Afro-American Newspapers and is a member of the Women's Foreign Policy Group. She is also a member of the Executive Committee of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights and is chairperson of its Criminal Justice Task Force.

Laura Murphy was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 18, 2001.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Laura Murphy was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on January 18, 2001, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Nonprofit chief executive Laura Murphy (1955 - ) is the director of the ACLU's Washington, D.C., office. Under Murphy's leadership, the ACLU Washington office has been instrumental in the passage of such legislation as: the Family Medical Leave Act, the Motor Voter Bill, the Freedom of Access to Clinics Act, and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Murphy and the Washington ACLU office have been praised by Democratic and Republican members of Congress.

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## 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Murphy, Laura W., 1955-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

**Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews  
Murphy, Laura W., 1955---Interviews

African american women executives-- Washington (D.C.)--Interviews

Nonprofit organizations--Employees--Washington (D.C.)--Interviews

Lobbyists--Interviews

African Americans--Genealogy

Pilgrims (New Plymouth Colony)--Genealogy

Passing (Identity)--United States--Massachusetts

Black race--Color

Wellesley College

Mitchell, Parren J.

Chisholm, Shirley, 1924-2005

Youth--United States--Political activity

United States.--Voting Rights Act of 1965

African American women civic leaders--Interviews

Human rights--United States

**Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

American Civil Liberties Union. Washington Office

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## Occupations:

Nonprofit Chief Executive

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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## 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 Laura Murphy, January 18, 2001. 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Laura Murphy, Section A2001\_051\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:59 ?

Laura Murphy, national director for the American Civil Liberties Union, details her family genealogy, which she traces back to white ancestors on the Mayflower. Murphy describes her parents' privileged backgrounds, but their advantages are tempered by ever-present racism. She describes her family's deep roots in Baltimore and her parents' political activism.

African american women executives--Washington (D.C.)--Interviews.

Nonprofit organizations--Employees--Washington (D.C.)--Interviews.

Lobbyists--Interviews.

African Americans--Genealogy.

Pilgrims (New Plymouth Colony)--Genealogy.

Passing (Identity)--Massachusetts.

Black race--Color.

Wellesley College.

Mitchell, Parren J.

Chisholm, Shirley, 1924-2005.

Youth--Political activity--United States.

United States. Voting Rights Act of 1965.

African American women civic leaders--Interviews.

Human rights--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Laura Murphy, Section A2001\_051\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Laura Murphy discusses the notion of "passing." She describes her family history of passing by some ancestors and even her mother. This caused a permanent rift between her mother and an aunt. Murphy talks about facing prejudice from other blacks for having a fair complexion. She describes the struggles and indignities she and her siblings faced, particularly because some siblings were not as fair complected as she. Murphy also describes her parents' political activism and her childhood involvement in the campaigns of several noted Baltimore politicians.

Video Oral History Interview with Laura Murphy, Section A2001\_051\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:21 ?

Laura Murphy describes her experience through high school and college. She recalls a high school guidance counselor discouraging her from applying to elite schools. Murphy ignored the advice, gaining acceptance to Wellesley, Brown, and Radcliffe, choosing to attend Wellesley. Murphy remembers her time at Wellesley, and explains how she used her experience there to work in the offices of Parren Mitchell and Shirley Chisholm. Murphy then describes the beginning of her long career at the ACLU.

Video Oral History Interview with Laura Murphy, Section A2001\_051\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:27 ?

Laura Murphy discusses one of her greatest accomplishments at the ACLU, her successful lobbying for the extension of the Voting Rights Act. Murphy also talks about her personal life, including marriage, divorce, and career changes. Murphy describes the evolution of her career at the ACLU, explaining how she became Executive Director of the organization's Washington, D.C. office.

Video Oral History Interview with Laura Murphy, Section A2001\_051\_001\_005, TRT: 0:20:14 ?

Laura Murphy details how vital the work of the ACLU has been in protecting the rights of all Americans, even if their causes weren't always popular. She sees her efforts as part of a continuum of family activism and her activism as a child. Murphy admits the grueling pace and demands of her job have caused her to contemplate leaving to paint and sculpt. Murphy wants to leave a legacy of a woman who was a courageous advocate on behalf of people whose rights were being denied.