

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Joyce Ladner

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Ladner, Joyce A.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Joyce Ladner,
Dates:	June 11, 2003 and June 9, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	13 Betacame SP videocassettes (6:18:51).
Abstract:	Sociologist and academic administrator Joyce Ladner (1943 -) is the former vice president of academic affairs and interim president of Howard University, and a senior fellow for the Brookings Institute in Governmental Affairs. She has served on the District of Columbia Financial Control Board, overseeing budgetary restructuring of the public school system. Ladner was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 11, 2003 and June 9, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_128
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Sociologist Joyce Ladner was born in Battles, Mississippi, on October 12, 1943. She attended Tougaloo College in Tougaloo, Mississippi, where she earned her B.A. in sociology in 1964 and went on to Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, to earn a Ph.D. in 1968.

At school, she also became involved in the civil rights movement. After earning her Ph.D., Ladner went on to teach at colleges in Illinois; Washington, D.C.; Connecticut; and Tanzania. Ladner published her first book in 1971, *Tomorrow's Tomorrow: The Black Woman*, a study of poor black adolescent girls from St. Louis. In 1973, Ladner joined the faculty of Hunter College at the City University of New York.

Leaving Hunter College for Howard University in Washington, D.C., Ladner served as vice president for academic affairs from 1990 to 1994 and as interim president of Howard University from 1994 to 1995. In 1995, President Bill Clinton appointed her to the District of Columbia Financial Control Board, where she oversees the finances and budgetary restructuring of the public school system. She is also a senior fellow in the Governmental Studies Program at the Brookings Institution, a Washington, D.C. think tank and research organization. She has spoken nationwide about the importance of improving education for public school students. She has appeared on nationally syndicated radio and television programs as well.

Ladner is active in a number of civic and professional organizations. She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, The American Sociological Association, the Washington Urban League, the Washington Women's Forum and the Coalition of 100 Black Women. In 1997, she was named Washingtonian of the Year by *Washingtonian* for her work in education.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Joyce Ladner was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 11, 2003 and June 9, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 13 Betacame SP videocassettes. Sociologist and academic administrator Joyce Ladner (1943 -) is the former vice president of academic affairs and interim president of Howard University, and a senior fellow for the Brookings Institute in Governmental Affairs. She has served on the District of Columbia Financial Control Board, overseeing budgetary restructuring of the public school system.

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:

Ladner, Joyce A.

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Ladner, Joyce A.--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Civil Rights 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 Joyce Ladner, June 11, 2003 and June 9, 2003. 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 Joyce Ladner, Section A2003_128_001_001, TRT: 0:30:14 ?

Joyce Ladner describes her family background. Ladner's maternal great-grandfather, Benjamin Woullard, was a white farmer from Rockingham County, North Carolina who later settled in State Line, Mississippi. Woullard led a double-life, as he was legally married to a woman named Unity Wooliford, but had a common law wife named Mary Woullard, a Creek Indian. Mary and Benjamin Woullard gave birth to Jerry Woullard, who later married Martha

Woullard and gave birth to Ladner's mother, Annie Ruth Woullard. Ladner met her white relatives at an interracial family reunion around 2000. Lander and her sister, Dorie, have researched their paternal family background, and speculate that their father, Eunice Stafford Ladner, descended from ancestors from Mississippi's Gulf Coast, Freetown, Sierra Leone or Lagos, Nigeria. Eunice Stafford Ladner met Annie Ruth Woullard in 1941 in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, where she worked at a box factory. The couple married in 1941, and gave birth to Joyce Ladner on October 12, 1943.

Video Oral History Interview with Joyce Ladner, Section A2003_128_001_002, TRT: 0:30:14 ?

Joyce Ladner's father, Eunice Stafford Ladner, was born to Thomas and Della McCloud Ladner in 1915. Della McCloud Ladner grew up in North Carolina, and married Thomas Ladner after moving to Hilddale, Mississippi. She moved to Chicago, Illinois, and then to Oroville, California after her husband's death around the 1950s. Eunice Ladner was married prior to marrying Annie Ruth Woullard in 1941, and had a son named Woodrow Ladner. Joyce Ladner developed a close relationship with him as a young adult. Annie Ruth Woullard divorced Eunice Ladner around 1944, and later remarried. Annie Woullard was straightforward and tenacious. Ladner grew up in the Palmer's Crossing community of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, where, she caught lightning bugs, watched summer baseball games, and listened to her uncle's stories of World War I. Ladner's next door neighbors, the "Goat Sisters," were known for taking artists home from the nearby Embassy Club. As a girl, Ladner was protected by her sister, HistoryMaker Dorie Ladner.

Video Oral History Interview with Joyce Ladner, Section A2003_128_001_003, TRT: 0:30:41 ?

As a girl, Joyce Ladner was close with her older sister, HistoryMaker Dorie Ladner. Thus, Ladner's mother enrolled her in pre-school at the age of three so she could be close to her sister, who was in first grade. Ladner was promoted to the first grade, so the Ladner sisters completed the remainder of their education together. In grade school, Joyce Ladner enjoyed writing and English. Her teacher, Ms. Zola Jackson, also influenced her love of reading. Ladner often stayed home from school to help her mother raise her younger siblings. Teachers would often pay visits to the Ladner household to see that she was okay. In 1955, Ladner enrolled at Earl Travillion High School in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Here, she was influenced by Ms. Chapman, who led the New Homemakers of America Club. Ladner was involved in the Tri-Hi-Y Club, as well, eventually becoming state president. Ladner also talked about her grade school classmate, Hattie Mae Nailer.

Video Oral History Interview with Joyce Ladner, Section A2003_128_001_004, TRT: 0:29:48 ?

Joyce Ladner developed her leadership skills as a student at Earl Travillion High School in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Her teachers found innovative ways to instruct students with limited resources, and encouraged them to excel academically. Much of Ladner's social life centered around the Baptist Church, where she was involved with the Baptist Training Union. Ladner's parents were not churchgoers, so she was exposed to the church by attending funerals and revivals with her Great Aunt Icie. A strict woman, Ladner's mother monitored her social life closely, and eventually removed her from the church to prevent her from dating. However, Ladner attended church behind her mother's back. She wore her first pair of high heels in secret, and had a boyfriend during her senior year of high school, as well. As a youth, Ladner was angered by racism. In fact, while working as a domestic as a high school student, Ladner reacted to a racist incident by making her employer's pancakes with dirty sink water and old grease.

Video Oral History Interview with Joyce Ladner, Section A2003_128_001_005, TRT: 0:30:14 ?

Joyce Ladner grew up in Hattiesburg, Mississippi's Palmer's Crossing neighborhood, which was noted for its vice culture. Ladner's mother taught she and her sister, HistoryMaker Dorie Ladner, to protect themselves, which Dorie Ladner did when a grocery store clerk attempted to molest her. In the late 1950s, Joyce and Dorie Ladner were exposed to the Civil Rights Movement by a family friend. They also attended NAACP conferences with leaders of the Forrest County Chapter of the NAACP. After graduating from Earl Travillion High School in 1959, Joyce and Dorie Ladner enrolled at Jackson State University, but were expelled for participating in a Civil Rights demonstration. The enrolled at Tougaloo College in 1960, and Joyce Ladner was mentored by sociologist Ernst Borinski. In 1961, Dorie Ladner became involved with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Joyce Ladner worked with her to organize voter registration drives. Ladner also organized a campaign to free Clyde Kennard from prison.

Video Oral History Interview with Joyce Ladner, Section A2003_128_001_006, TRT: 0:29:08 ?

In the 1960s, Joyce Ladner organized a campaign to free Clyde Kennard from prison, who was framed for a petty crime after attempting to enroll at Mississippi State College. Ladner and her sister, HistoryMaker Dorie Ladner, were members of the NAACP Youth Council under Vernon Dahmer, president of the Forrest County Chapter of the NAACP in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, which one of Ladner's high school teachers spoke out against. Dahmer died in 1966 after his home was firebombed. Ladner knew Medgar Evers due to her NAACP involvement, and in 1960, he encouraged her organize a prayer vigil in support of a sit-in in Jackson, Mississippi. The vigil ended in violence, and Lander and her classmates held a public demonstration in response. This demonstration ended in violence as well, and led to Ladner's expulsion from Jackson State University. Ladner transferred to Tougaloo College in 1960. In 1963, the Ladner sisters fundraised for the March on Washington, and Dorie Ladner began a relationship with singer Bob Dylan.

Video Oral History Interview with Joyce Ladner, Section A2003_128_001_007, TRT: 0:30:24 ?

In 1963, Joyce Ladner raised money for the March on Washington. During the March on Washington, Ladner worked backstage with James Forman, Courtland Cox, and HistoryMaker John Lewis, where she witnessed him being forced to change his speech. Ladner was struck by the masses of people on the day of the march, and stars like Lean Horne that came to support the march. Horne recognized Ladner from the 1963 Delta Sigma Theta Convention, and encouraged CBS News Correspondent Nancy Dickerson to interview her. After the March on Washington, Ladner traveled to SNCC headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, where she met a SNCC worker to whom she became engaged. In September of 1963, Ladner traveled to Birmingham, Alabama to view the ruins of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. Around this time, Ladner's fiancé began using drugs and ended their engagement. She later learned that he abused drugs to cope with the trauma he faced as a civil rights worker, and Ladner's refusal to work for the Civil Rights Movement full time.

Video Oral History Interview with Joyce Ladner, Section A2003_128_001_008, TRT: 0:24:39 ?

Joyce Ladner helped organize the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer as a Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee staff person. As a Mississippi native, Ladner feared the cultural and class dissonance that could arise between educated, middle class, white civil rights workers and poor blacks. Ladner also worried that the Freedom Summer could undermine local activist organizations, or encourage retaliation from whites. Tensions surround the Mississippi

Freedom Summer increased after the murders of civil rights workers Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, and James Chaney. Ladner described the cultural dissonance that arose between her and white civil rights activist Joan Trumpauer Mulholland. In 1964, Ladner attended the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey as a member of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). Ladner began losing faith in the Civil Rights Movement after the MFDP was refused full participation in the Convention.

Video Oral History Interview with Joyce Ladner, Section A2003_128_002_009, TRT: 0:30:12 ?

In the summer of 1966, Joyce Ladner worked in Mississippi as the assistant to HistoryMaker Dr. Alvin Poussaint. She gave medical care to civil rights workers, and researched definitions of Black Power, leading to her first publication. Ladner returned to Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, to complete her doctoral program. Ladner performed ethnographic research on teenage girls who lived in the Pruitt-Igoe housing projects, leading to her 1971 book, "Tomorrow's Tomorrow: The Black Woman." Ladner graduated with her doctoral degree in sociology in 1968, and went on to work in East St. Louis, Illinois with an experimental education program. After a year, Ladner's mentor, Lee Rainwater, convinced her to interview for a faculty position at Harvard University, but she ultimately decided to work at the Institute of the Black World in Atlanta, Georgia. In 1970, Ladner helped found the Association of Black Sociologists. Her second book, "The Death of White Sociology," was published in 1973.

Video Oral History Interview with Joyce Ladner, Section A2003_128_002_010, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

After working for a year at the Institute of the Black World, Joyce Ladner received studied in Africa for several months in 1971. That fall, Ladner was hired as a sociology professor at Howard University. She later met HistoryMaker Walter Carrington at a bar in Haiti, and the couple married and moved to New York City in 1973. That same year, Ladner began writing her third book, "Mixed Families: Adopting Across Racial Lines." In 1975, Ladner was hired as a professor at Hunter College in New York City, New York. She also lectured at the City University of New York. In 1980, Walter Carrington was appointed as the U.S. Ambassador to Senegal, and Ladner moved with him to Senegal. Here, she developed a close friendship to Carrie Daley, former wife of Ousmane Sembène. After returning to the U.S. in 1981, Ladner joined the faculty at Howard University. She and Walter Carrington divorced in 1984. In 1990, Ladner was unexpected hired as the Vice President of Academic Affairs at Howard University.

Video Oral History Interview with Joyce Ladner, Section A2003_128_002_011, TRT: 0:30:09 ?

In 1990, Joyce Ladner was hired as the Vice President of Academic Affairs at Howard University. Ladner led a major restructuring of the institution to remedy its financial deficit. In 1994, Ladner was selected to serve as the Interim President of Howard University. She was also a candidate for the Presidency of Hunter College, and Howard University's faculty senate sent Hunter College a negative recommendation of Ladner. Ladner also described the work culture at Howard University. Ladner left Howard University in 1995, and took a two year leave of absence. During this time, Ladner was appointed by President Bill Clinton to serve on the District of Columbia Financial Control Board. She also began writing "The Ties That Bind," which was inspired by her mother's death. In the mid-1990s, Ladner became a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, where she felt liberated in light of her experiences at Howard University. Ladner also described her hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Joyce Ladner, Section A2003_128_002_012, TRT: 0:29:33 ?

Joyce Ladner reflects upon her legacy. Ladner's books that she has written that center on community values, like "The Ties That Bind" and "The New Urban Leaders" are Ladner's most important legacies. Ladner is also proud of her parenting guide, "Launching Our Black Children for Success: A Guide for Parents of Kids from Three to Eighteen." Ladner also leaves behind a legacy as a scholar who made contributions to the field of sociology, and as a Civil Rights activist. Ladner was forced to retire after being diagnosed with fibromyalgia. The disease slowed down her cognitive functions, and Ladner struggled with this reality for a while. However, she now aspires to be a painter. Ladner would like to be remembered as someone who did the best she could. She closes the tape by narrating her photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Joyce Ladner, Section A2003_128_002_013, TRT: 0:24:05 ?

Joyce Ladner narrates her photographs.