

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Scruggs-Leftwich, Yvonne
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich,
Dates:	August 1, 2003 and November 20, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	9 Betacame SP videocassettes (4:25:20).
Abstract:	Nonprofit chief executive Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich (1933 -) is the executive director and COO of the Black Leadership Forum and a leading scholar on issues of race and urban politics. Scruggs-Leftwich was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 1, 2003 and November 20, 2003, in Wheaton, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_175
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Policy scholar Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich is one of the most important intellectual leaders of the modern civil rights movement. Born in Niagara Falls, New York, on June 24, 1933, Scruggs-Leftwich is the executive director and chief operating officer of the Black Leadership Forum.

Scruggs-Leftwich grew up in Buffalo and earned her B.A. with honors from North Carolina Central University. She holds an advanced degree in public administration from the University of Minnesota and received her Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania in city and regional planning and urban policy. Her research and opinions on issues of race, public policy and social justice have caught the attention of many. In addition to professorships at Howard University, the State University of New York, the University of Pennsylvania and George Washington University, Scruggs-Leftwich has served in several policymaking capacities at various levels of government. Previously she worked as deputy mayor of Philadelphia, housing commissioner for the state of New York, and deputy assistant secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Scruggs-Leftwich also co-owned three banking corporations in New York and has consulted on matters of municipal finance. She is in demand as a speaker on a number of issues.

In 1998, Scruggs-Leftwich became the leader of the Black Leadership Forum, a coalition of national civil rights and service organizations. Scruggs-Leftwich helps facilitate dialogue among top African Americans and across racial lines, becoming one of the preeminent thinkers and speakers on black leadership and urban politics. Among her many publications are *Consensus and Compromise: The Making of National Urban Policy*, *Sound Bites of Protest* and *Standing with My Fist*. Scruggs-Leftwich works as a commentator on *News Hour with Jim Lehrer*, writes a syndicated column for the National Newspaper Association, and frequently appears as a guest on public affairs and news programs. Scruggs-Leftwich was also the recipient of a prestigious Fulbright Fellowship for graduate study in Germany.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 1, 2003 and November 20, 2003, in Wheaton, Maryland, and was recorded on 9 Betacame SP videocassettes. Nonprofit chief executive Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich (1933 -) is the executive director and COO of the Black Leadership Forum and a leading scholar on issues of race and urban politics.

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:

Scruggs-Leftwich, Yvonne

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Scruggs-Leftwich, Yvonne--Interviews

African American authors--Interviews

African American women civic leaders--Interviews

African American television journalists--Interviews

African American scholars--Interviews

African American executives--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Nonprofit Chief Executive

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 Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich, August 1, 2003 and November 20, 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 Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich, Section A2003_175_001_001, TRT: 0:30:20 ?

Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich was born on June 24, 1933 in Niagara Falls, New York. Her mother, Geneva Ellen Byrd, was born in 1906 in Windfall, Virginia. She attended St. Paul's College in Lawrenceville, Virginia and worked as an educator. Her father taught at the Virginia Seminary in Alexandria, Virginia. Scruggs-Leftwich's father, Leonard Andrew Scruggs, Sr. was born at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina in 1896. His father, Dr. Lawson Andrew Scruggs, was a practicing physician, associate dean of Shaw's medical school and authored 'Women of Distinction: Remarkable in Works and Invincible in Character' in response to negative stereotypes about African American women. Scruggs, Sr. attended the Ohio State University College of Medicine. He finished his studies, however, in embalming and undertaking and migrated to Niagara Falls to open a funeral parlor. At the onset of the Great Depression, he worked as a Pullman Porter and later as an electrician wiring planes and trains in the New York Central Railroad.

African American authors--Interviews.

African American women civic leaders--Interviews.

African American television journalists--Interviews.

African American scholars--Interviews.

African American executives--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich, Section A2003_175_001_002, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich's maternal grandfather was an itinerant Baptist minister; however, her mother was Episcopalian. Scruggs-Leftwich's earliest childhood memories are of playing in her godparents' garden. She also accompanied her mother to her job as a dietitian in a nursery school for descendants of Frank Jerome Tone, president of the Carborundum Company in Niagara Falls, New York. In Niagara Falls, the Scruggs' family lived in an Italian neighborhood where they were the only African American residents. The family moved to Buffalo, New York when Scruggs-Leftwich was four. There, she attended P.S. 75 Elementary and Fosdick-Masten Park High School. She never had any African American teachers and recalls several incidents where teachers discriminated against her because of her race. Scruggs-Leftwich remembers the discussions about racism in her home and the family dog that once saved her baby brother from wandering into the street. As a child, she enjoyed reading and took music and dance lessons.

Video Oral History Interview with Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich, Section A2003_175_001_003, TRT: 0:29:35 ?

Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich talks about her parents' advocacy for racial equality and their experiences with institutional racism. Her father, Leonard Andrew Scruggs, Sr. was employed as an electrician at the onset of World War II. As eligible young men were being drafted, older black workers were filling vacancies in senior positions. In order to prevent Scruggs Sr. from being promoted to supervisor, he was sent by the medical examiner to a tuberculosis sanitarium. Scruggs-Leftwich attended Fosdick-Masten Park High School in Buffalo, New York where she was involved with the school newspaper, the local

YMCA and the school debate team. She experienced the intersections of race and gender discrimination as part of the debate team and was eventually forced to drop debate. Scruggs aspired to be a civil rights lawyer. She attended North Carolina College for Negroes in Durham, North Carolina where she was active in student government, the school newspaper and school plays.

Video Oral History Interview with Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich, Section A2003_175_001_004, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich attended North Carolina College for Negroes in Durham, North Carolina where she majored in political science, minored in history and was elected president of the women's student government. However, she lost when she ran for president of the general student body because students refused to vote for a female candidate. In response, university president, Dr. Alfonso Elder, created a position called The Undergraduate Public Relations Officer for Scruggs-Leftwich and her responsibilities involved working with the administration as opposed to the student body. Scruggs-Leftwich was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to study at the University of Bonn in Bonn, Germany. She transferred to Freie Universität Berlin—the Free university of Berlin and the Institute of Political Science. While abroad, she became close friends with a group of Jewish American students and observed first-hand the anti-Semitism in German culture. She returned to the United States in 1956.

Video Oral History Interview with Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich, Section A2003_175_002_005, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich returned from the Free University of Berlin in 1956 and enrolled at the School for Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University in Washington, D.C. As one of only two African American students, she experienced a great deal of discrimination. She left SAIS for an assistantship at the Hubert Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis where she earned her master's degree. In 1959, she moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and was hired as a specialist on a City of Philadelphia urban renewal project. Scruggs-Leftwich initially planned to pursue her interest in international affairs, but discovered she was better suited to a career in urban planning. She would go on to become associate director of the Philadelphia counsel for Community Advancement and to earn her Ph.D. in urban planning. Scruggs-Leftwich talks about her mentors including HistoryMaker Horace Dawson who was her professor and North Carolina Central University.

Video Oral History Interview with Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich, Section A2003_175_002_006, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich talks about the impact of the Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon administrations on urban development between 1961 and 1969. The Model Cities Program was developed as an antipoverty and federal reformation initiative. The program, however, was eliminated under the Nixon Administration. Scruggs-Leftwich was hired by the Model Cities program and left in 1969. She began her doctoral studies in urban planning at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and completed her coursework in 1972. In 1974, she was invited to join the faculty at Howard University in Washington D.C. In 1978, she joined the Jimmy Carter administration as Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). She was also assigned to serve as executive director of the Urban and Regional Policy Task Force where she led the year-long process of developing policy. Scruggs-Leftwich talks about the U.S. government's exclusion of African Americans from urban policy decision-making.

Video Oral History Interview with Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich, Section A2003_175_002_007, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich was assigned by then-Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Patricia Roberts Harris to manage a \$100 million discretionary fund during her tenure as Deputy Assistant Secretary of the HUD. Scruggs-Leftwich lists grants that were awarded by the fund, including an award for the reservation and preservation of a Native American community in Adobe, New Mexico. Scruggs-Leftwich admired HUD Secretary Patricia Robert Harris, but found President Jimmy Carter's management style inefficient. She left HUD after two years to return to academia and Howard University in Washington, D.C. After her mother died in 1981, she moved to Buffalo, New York and accepted a position as director for the regional office of the State Housing Agency. She met her second husband, the Reverend Edward V. Leftwich, who had been then-regional director of Housing and Community Renewal in Albany, New York. In 1982, she was appointed Commissioner of Housing and Community Renewal under New York Governor Mario Cuomo.

Video Oral History Interview with Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich, Section A2003_175_002_008, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich was appointed state commissioner of Housing and Community Renewal in New York under Governor Mario Cuomo in 1982, but subject to discriminatory attacks from within the gubernatorial administration. She turned down Cuomo's offer to appoint her chairman of the Advisory Committee of African American Affairs and resigned in 1985. She was then asked by Wilson Goode, to join the mayoral office as deputy mayor of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her husband, Reverend Edward V. Leftwich, worked simultaneously to develop an electronic banking corporation and established three corporations; two in New York City and a flagship location in Buffalo, New York. Scruggs-Leftwich was named the operating officer of these corporations. The corporations were closed in 1990 and Scruggs-Leftwich was invited by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies to join the Urban Policy Institute in Washington D.C. She ran the institute until 1995 and was also named director of the Executive Leadership Council.

Video Oral History Interview with Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich, Section A2003_175_002_009, TRT: 0:28:45 ?

Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community and how she would like to be remembered. She considers what she would have done differently in her life and reflects upon her legacy. She concludes by narrating of her photographs.