

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Harriett G. Jenkins

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Jenkins, Harriett G., 1926-2016
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Harriett G. Jenkins,
Dates:	August 12, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:24:44).
Abstract:	Research manager Harriett G. Jenkins (1926 - 2016) served as the assistant administrator for equal opportunity programs at NASA, where she was responsible for implementing programs that assisted minorities, including recruiting some of the agency's first black astronauts. She was also appointed as the director of the Office of Senate Fair Employment Practices in the U.S. Senate. Jenkins was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 12, 2004, in Bethesda, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_126
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Harriet Elizabeth Jenkins was born on July 26, 1926 in Forth Worth, Texas. She and her sister were raised by an aunt and uncle after the death of both her parents before she was ten years old. At the age of fourteen, in 1941, she graduated from I.M. Terrill High School and received a full scholarship to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee.

She attended Fisk from 1941 until 1945, where she earned her bachelor's of arts degree in mathematics. In 1945, she left Nashville and joined her sister in California, where she worked in a clerical position at Pacific Overseas Air Service Command until 1948.

There, Jenkins worked as a writer for Golden State Insurance Company and an Identification clerk for the Oakland Police Department from 1948 until 1954. Leaving there, she began her teaching career in the Berkeley, California school system. She quickly rose through the ranks, serving as the city's first Black female vice-principal. In 1957, she earned her master's degree in education from the University of California at Berkeley. She went on to become a school principal, director of elementary education and assistant superintendent of schools. In 1974, Jenkins left Berkeley and moved to Washington, D.C. to be with her husband.

From 1974 until 1992, Jenkins worked as the assistant administrator for equal opportunity programs at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). During her nearly twenty-year tenure at NASA, she was responsible for implementing several programs that assisted minorities and women, including recruiting some of the agency's first African American astronauts. Her efforts extended beyond the astronaut program and included providing more opportunities for minorities in NASA's procurement contracts and research efforts. Under her leadership, university research centers were started and supported in Historically Black Colleges. In 1984, she earned her law degree from Georgetown University.

From 1992 until 1996, she worked with the U.S. Congress and served as the director at the Office of Senate Fair Employment Practices in the U.S. Senate. Her duties included ensuring the requirements of the Civil Rights Act of 1991 were administered for all Senate employees and the Capitol Police. Jenkins also assisted Senate staffs in implementation of the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993.

Jenkins retired from the federal government in 1996. In 2000, NASA established a fellowship program in her name, awarding doctoral fellowships to qualifying minority students. She was the recipient of numerous awards and honors including placing her retirement in the Congressional Record.

Jenkins passed away on December 21, 2016.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Harriett G. Jenkins was conducted by Racine Tucker Hamilton on August 12, 2004, in Bethesda, Maryland, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Research manager Harriett G. Jenkins (1926 - 2016) served as the assistant administrator for equal opportunity programs at NASA, where she was responsible for implementing programs that assisted minorities, including recruiting some of the agency's first black astronauts. She was also appointed as the director of the Office of Senate Fair Employment Practices in the U.S. Senate.

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:

Jenkins, Harriett G., 1926-2016

Hamilton, Racine Tucker (Interviewer)

Lane, Edgar Carey (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Jenkins, Harriett G., 1926-2016--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Federal Government Administrator

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 Harriett G. Jenkins, August 12, 2004. 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 Harriett G. Jenkins, Section A2004_126_001_001, TRT: 0:30:11
?

Harriett G. Jenkins was born on July 26, 1926 in Fort Worth Texas. Her father, Henry Green, who worked in a brass foundry, died when Jenkins was very young. Her mother, Vivian Moore Green, was a devout Pentecostal Christian and died when Jenkins was nine. Jenkins had four brothers, including an older brother Leonard, who was a dancer in New York City; they died during her childhood. After her parents' death, Jenkins and her sister Aileene were adopted by her maternal uncle and aunt, Richard and Mattie Moore. Jenkins was close with her maternal grandmother, Fannie Mae Stokes Moore, who owned her own homestead where the family stayed for holidays. She remembers cooking as well as playing the piano at her grandmother's house and then at church. Jenkins skipped first grade because she had already learned to read, and her teachers at I.M. Terrell High School in Fort Worth wrote on her behalf to win her a scholarship to Fisk University in Nashville, where she was in a madrigal singing group.

Video Oral History Interview with Harriett G. Jenkins, Section A2004_126_001_002, TRT: 0:31:12
?

Harriett G. Jenkins graduated from I.M. Terrell High School in Fort Worth, Texas in 1941, at fourteen. She received a scholarship to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, where she lived in Jubilee Hall, majored in mathematics, and performed in the Fisk University Choir. After graduating in 1945, Jenkins moved to California to join her sister Aileene. She first worked as a clerk for the Pacific Overseas Air Service Command in Oakland. By 1948, Jenkins applied to the Berkeley Unified School District, but she was rejected due to Berkeley, California not employing black women as high school teachers. Instead, she sold policies for the Golden State Insurance Company and then was an identification clerk for the Oakland Police Department. Jenkins enjoyed living in California due to its natural beauty and lack of de jure segregation. In 1954, she was finally hired as a teacher in Berkeley, and subsequently was appointed vice principal of Lincoln Elementary in 1957 and principal of Emerson Elementary in 1959.

Video Oral History Interview with Harriett G. Jenkins, Section A2004_126_001_003, TRT: 0:30:14
?

Harriett G. Jenkins favored inclusive special education while principal of Emerson Elementary in Berkeley, California. During the mid-1960s, Jenkins became director of elementary education for Berkeley Unified School District. She helped administer the desegregation of the district elementary schools in 1968, which involved two-way busing, and defeat an effort to recall school board members who supported integration. Jenkins moved to Washington, D.C. in 1973. After she was unable to find a job in education, she was hired in 1974 as deputy assistant administrator for equal opportunity programs at NASA, where she operated a program mandated by U.S. Congress to increase the hiring of women, minorities and the disabled. Jenkins worked with Dr. Joseph Atkinson to integrate NASA's astronaut corps, developing screening that selected HistoryMakers Guion Bluford, Col. Frederick Drew Gregory, and more. She urged NASA to offer opportunities to minority-owned contracting firms and historically black colleges.

Video Oral History Interview with Harriett G. Jenkins, Section A2004_126_001_004, TRT: 0:30:57

?

Harriett G. Jenkins, while working for the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs at NASA, focused on building programs to help women and minorities succeed in graduate and doctoral programs in math and science. Jenkins was honored when the organization named a grant program for women and minorities pursuing graduate degrees in science the Harriett G. Jenkins Predoctoral Fellowship Program. She left NASA in 1992 in order to lead the new Office of Fair Employment Practices at the United States Senate, where she worked until 1996. After retiring from the federal government, Jenkins joined the Montgomery County Commission on Human Rights in 1997. Her support for affirmative action programs and diversity gave her insight into the underlying issues and impact of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Gratz v. Bollinger*. Jenkins reflects upon her life and legacy. She describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community, how she would like to be remembered, and why she believes history is important.

Video Oral History Interview with Harriett G. Jenkins, Section A2004_126_001_005, TRT: 0:22:10
?

Harriett G. Jenkins narrates her photographs.