

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Constance Berry Newman

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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>	Newman, Constance Ernestine Berry, 1935-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Constance Berry Newman,
<b>Dates:</b>	December 9, 2004
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2004
<b>Physical Description:</b>	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:02:27).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Cabinet appointee and federal government appointee Constance Berry Newman (1935 - ) has served in numerous government posts starting in 1962. Newman has been the director of VISTA, a special assistant to the Secretary of Health and Human Services, and Assistant Secretary of State African Affairs. Newman was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 9, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2004_252
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Constance Ernestine Berry Newman was born on July 8, 1935, in Chicago, Illinois. Her mother was a social worker and nurse and her father was a physician. Wanting to play a more active role in the civil rights movement, her father relocated the family to Tuskegee, Alabama. Newman attended Tuskegee Institute High School, located on the campus of the Tuskegee University, where she was an honor roll student and active in the Government Club. She earned her high school diploma in 1952. In 1956, Newman earned her B.A. degree in political science from Bates College, where she was active on the debate team and pre-law club. In 1959, she earned her law degree from the University of Minnesota Law School and then moved to France with her husband, who was a member of the United States Air Force.

Returning to the United States, Newman moved to Washington, D.C., in 1962, and despite having a law degree, the only employment she was able to obtain was as a clerk typist with the United States Interior Department. She remained at the Interior Department until 1967, working her way through the ranks serving as a personnel assistant and eventually personnel manager. From 1967 until 1969, Newman worked for the Office of Economic Development working with migrant farmers and then served as Special Assistant to Elliott Richardson, who headed what is now known as the Department of Health and Human Services. In 1971, she was appointed by former President Richard Nixon to serve as director of VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), the domestic Peace Corps. From 1973 until 1976 she served as the director of the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Between 1976 and 1977, Newman oversaw the consumer unit focused on Indian and elderly affairs as the assistant director of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. In 1977, she co-founded Newman and Hermanson Company, a consulting firm specializing in the government regulatory procedures. From 1982 until 1984, Newman worked for the Institute of American Business. In 1984, Newman served as a private consultant to on issues related to Africa, working on a World Bank project in which she lived and worked in the South African

country of Lesotho. In 1989, President George H.W. Bush appointed her director of the Office of Personnel Management, and in 1992, she served as Under Secretary of the Smithsonian Institute.

In 2001, Newman was sworn in as an Assistant Administrator for Africa of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the government agency that administers economic and humanitarian assistance worldwide. In 2004, Newman was appointed Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and sworn in by Secretary of State Colin Powell. She resigned in April 2005.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Constance Berry Newman was conducted by Racine Tucker Hamilton on December 9, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Cabinet appointee and federal government appointee Constance Berry Newman (1935 - ) has served in numerous government posts starting in 1962. Newman has been the director of VISTA, a special assistant to the Secretary of Health and Human Services, and Assistant Secretary of State African Affairs.

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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:

Newman, Constance Ernestine Berry, 1935-

Hamilton, Racine Tucker (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Newman, Constance Ernestine Berry, 1935---Interviews

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African American government executives--Washington (D.C.)--Interviews

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Segregation--Alabama--Tuskegee

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African American families--Middle West

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Marshall, Thurgood, 1908-1993

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Bates College (Lewiston, Me.)

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Education--Alabama-Tuskegee

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University of Minnesota. College of Law

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Fathers--Death--Psychological aspects

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Sex discrimination in higher education--Minnesota

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Americans--Foreign countries

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United States. Dept. of the Interior

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United States. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders

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United States. Dept. of Health and Human Services

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United States. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development

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Volunteers in Service to America

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Women in politics--United States

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Republican Party (U.S. : 1854-)

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Smithsonian Institution

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African American political consultants--Interviews

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AIDS (Disease)--Social aspects--Africa

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United States. Agency for International Development

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Africa--Social conditions

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African Americans--Relations with Africans

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Africa--Economic conditions

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Economic assistance, American--Africa

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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United States. Dept of State

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## Occupations:

Cabinet Appointee

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Federal Government Appointee

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

PoliticalMakers

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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 Constance Berry Newman, December 9, 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Constance Berry Newman, Section A2004\_252\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:13 ?

Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Constance Berry Newman describes her family background and experiences living in Chicago, Minnesota, and Alabama. Berry's father took a medical staff position at Tuskegee, Alabama's Veteran's Hospital and Newman recalls the feeling of living in a completely segregated atmosphere for the first time. Newman discusses her early education and ambitions to become a civil rights lawyer. Newman explains how Thurgood Marshall and his work with the NAACP inspired her.

African American government executives--Washington (D.C.)--Interviews.

Segregation--Alabama--Tuskegee.

African American families--Middle West.

Marshall, Thurgood, 1908-1993.

Bates College (Lewiston, Me.).

Education--Alabama-Tuskegee.

University of Minnesota. College of Law.

Fathers--Death--Psychological aspects.

Sex discrimination in higher education--Minnesota.

Americans--Foreign countries.

United States. Dept. of the Interior.

United States. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders.

United States. Dept. of Health and Human Services.

United States. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development.

Volunteers in Service to America.

Women in politics--United States.

Republican Party (U.S. : 1854-).

Smithsonian Institution.

African American political consultants--Interviews.

AIDS (Disease)--Social aspects--Africa.

United States. Agency for International Development.

Africa--Social conditions

African Americans--Relations with Africans.

Africa--Economic conditions

Economic assistance, American--Africa.

Video Oral History Interview with Constance Berry Newman, Section A2004\_252\_001\_002, TRT:

0:30:52 ?

Constance Berry Newman discusses her secondary and post-secondary school years in Alabama and at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. Newman details her time at Bates, finding it a welcoming environment where she dedicated herself to her studies and preparing herself for law school. Newman was set to attend Case Western Reserve University Law School, but her father's death prompted her to move closer to her family and attend the University of Minnesota Law School instead. Newman describes her experience as one of three women in a class of three hundred and tells of overcoming sexism. She then talks about her three years in France and her first job in the government for the U.S. Department of the Interior, where she did work for the Kerner Commission.

Video Oral History Interview with Constance Berry Newman, Section A2004\_252\_001\_003, TRT: 0:31:21 ?

Constance Berry Newman details her career in the United States government, including her posts with the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and Volunteers In Service To America. She describes the difficulties of being the only or one of a few minority females holding a government post in Republican administrations during the 1960s-1990s. Newman discusses her work with various agencies and organizations dealing with Africa, including the African Development Program. She also talks about her period of employment with the Smithsonian Institute, and starting her own consulting business, Upstart.

Video Oral History Interview with Constance Berry Newman, Section A2004\_252\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:01 ?

Constance Berry Newman details her position as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in the George W. Bush administration and the challenges the various countries face in terms of HIV/AIDS and economic and political pressures. Newman discusses the perception of Africa in the eyes of African Americans stressing a need for intercontinental connection, and support for the African Union. She also discusses her involvement with the U.S. Agency for International Development, where she also focused on aid and development in Africa.