

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Hannah H. Thomas

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Thomas, Hannah H., 1916-2014
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Hannah H. Thomas,
Dates:	March 15, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:49:30).
Abstract:	Elementary school teacher Hannah H. Thomas (1916 - 2014) taught school in Cincinnati for twenty-two years and established the African American Heritage Day and the Sojourner Truth Drama group. Thomas was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 15, 2005, in Cincinnati, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_065
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Elementary school teacher Hannah H. Thomas was born in Florence, Alabama on December 25, 1916. The eighth of ten children, she is the daughter of Evernee Hubbard and Everett N. Hawkins. Thomas graduated from Burrell High School in Florence, Alabama in 1939 and earned her B.S. degree in education from Alabama A & M University in 1951. She later earned her M.S. degree in education from the University of Cincinnati in 1964.

Thomas taught school for more than ten years in Alabama, and was given a Teacher of the Year award in 1956 before she moved to Cincinnati in 1958. She taught in the public schools in Cincinnati for twenty-two years. Although officially retired from teaching, she continues working as an educator. She also founded Cincinnati's African American Heritage Day and the Sojourner Truth Drama Group.

Thomas has received many awards and honors, including her selection as one of 200 Greater Cincinnatians during the bicentennial in 1988, a *Cincinnati Enquirer* Woman of the Year Award in 1992, and the Zeta Phi Beta, the Beta Zeta Zeta Chapter, Woman of the Year Award in 1998. Thomas is also listed in *America's Registry of Outstanding Professionals* and *Who's Who in the World*. She passed away on January 22, 2014.

Hannah H. Thomas was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* March 15, 2005.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Hannah H. Thomas was conducted by Regennia Williams on March 15, 2005, in Cincinnati, Ohio, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Elementary school teacher Hannah H. Thomas (1916 - 2014) taught school in Cincinnati for twenty-two years and established the African American Heritage Day and the Sojourner Truth Drama group.

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:

Thomas, Hannah H., 1916-2014

Williams, Regennia (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Thomas, Hannah H., 1916-2014--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Cincinnati Public Schools

Occupations:

Elementary School Teacher

HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

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 Hannah H. Thomas, March 15, 2005. 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 Hannah H. Thomas, Section A2005_065_001_001, TRT: 0:28:55 ?

Hannah H. Thomas was born on December 25, 1916 in Florence, Alabama to Evernee Hubbard Hawkins and Everett Hawkins. Both of her parents were born in Florence, Alabama. They had eight children and were sharecroppers and moved around Lauderdale County, Alabama before settling in Florence when Thomas was fourteen. Thomas attended a Rosenwald school and then a school established by her father and neighbors in a barn. She later attended school at Pigsah Methodist Church. After moving into town, her mother worked as a cook at Florence State Teacher's College, while her oldest sister was employed by a local family, and her father worked odd jobs. Although Thomas loved Florence, where she attended John F. Slater Elementary School and Burrell Normal School, the town struggled during the Great Depression. Thomas married

Monroe Thomas in 1945 in Cincinnati, Ohio, but upon their separation she returned to Alabama to enroll at Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical College in Huntsville; the couple subsequently divorced.

United States. Works Progress Administration.

Depressions--1929--United States.

Alabama A & M University.

Julius Rosenwald Fund--Buildings.

African Americans--Education--Southern States--History--20th century.

American Missionary Association.

Sharecroppers--Southern States.

Sharecropping--Alabama.

Farm life--Southern States.

African American children--Alabama.

African American families--Alabama.

Video Oral History Interview with Hannah H. Thomas, Section A2005_065_001_002, TRT: 0:29:11 ?

Hannah H. Thomas received her degree in home economics from Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical College in Huntsville, Alabama, where she watched speakers like Dr. Mary McCloud Bethune in 1952 and Mordecai Johnson. After graduation, Thomas returned to her home in Florence, Alabama where she taught for ten years before moving to Cincinnati, Ohio in 1958. Thomas received her M.A. degree in education in 1964 from the University of Cincinnati while teaching in the Lincoln Heights suburb. Thomas taught in Lincoln Heights for six years and Cincinnati for seventeen years before retiring in 1980. Thomas also raised her brother's two children. She founded the Harriet Beecher Stowe Cultural Association in 1981, and created the Sojourner Truth Troupe in 1985. After noticing the exclusion of African Americans from Cincinnati's centennial celebration in 1988, Thomas established the annual African American Heritage Day. Thomas also talks about the history of the Underground Railroad and police brutality in Cincinnati.

Bethune, Mary McLeod. 1875-1955.

African American teachers—Alabama.

African American teachers and the community--Ohio--Cincinnati.

Historic preservation--United States.

Alabama A & M University.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. 1811-1896.

Video Oral History Interview with Hannah H. Thomas, Section A2005_065_001_003, TRT: 0:30:02 ?

Hannah H. Thomas describes the improved relations between African Americans and police in Cincinnati, Ohio as well as the return of music festivals, including the Jazz Festival. Thomas describes her pride in the African American Heritage Day, arranging a field trip to the state capital and The Ohio State University for poor students, and being named one of the Cincinnati Enquirer's Women of the Year in 1992. Thomas also reflects upon what she perceives as negative changes in the NAACP. Thomas describes the negative impact of school integration and assimilation on the African American community and notes that many schools in Cincinnati remain segregated. Thomas also shares her concerns about the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which failed to address the impact of poverty on educational outcomes. At the

time of the interview, Thomas was writing a collection of children's poetry. She also enjoyed composing hymns.

Cincinnati (Ohio).

No Child Left Behind Act.

Race relations--Ohio--Cincinnati.

Discrimination in education Law and legislation--United States--History.

School integration.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Discrimination in education--Law and legislation--United States--History--20th century.

Segregation in education--Law and legislation--United States--History.

Video Oral History Interview with Hannah H. Thomas, Section A2005_065_001_004, TRT: 0:21:22 ?

Hannah H. Thomas shares her opinion on the proficiency tests required by the State of Ohio to advance students to the next grade level and to graduate. She describes the limitations of testing and her hope that proficiency testing will not be implemented for teachers. Thomas reflects upon her hopes and concerns for the African American community as well as her legacy. She concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.

Academic achievement--United States--Testing.