

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Patricia Stephens Due

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Due, Patricia Stephens
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Patricia Stephens Due,
Dates:	October 17, 2006 and October 18, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:09:49).
Abstract:	Civil rights activist Patricia Stephens Due (1939 - 2012) organized Florida A&M University students in lunch counter sit-ins in Florida and served as field secretary for CORE helping register more blacks to vote in north Florida at that time than any other region in the U.S. Due was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 17, 2006 and October 18, 2006, in Quincy, Florida. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_122
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Patricia Stephens Due has been a lifelong civil rights activist. For over forty years she has been steadfast in her commitment to the modern civil rights movement and in teaching younger generations about the history of the Black freedom struggles during the second half of the 20th century. Due was the leading force in the nation's first "Jail-In", as a college student at Florida A&M University in 1960, she chose a jail cell rather than paying a fine for sitting at the "Whites Only" lunch counter at a Woolworths store in Tallahassee, Florida.

Due was born in 1939 in Quincy, Florida to Lottie Mae Powell Stephens and Horace Walter Stephens. She was a middle child of three. Her sister Priscilla was born in 1937 and her brother Walter in 1941. Her childhood years were spent in an area of Quincy called St. Hebron (a rural family community) and in Miami and Belle Glade in southern Florida. At age 13, she and her sister defied segregationist laws in Quincy when they stood in the line at a Dairy Queen marked WHITE ONLY, ignoring the COLORED WINDOW. Due graduated from high school in Belle Glade and entered Florida A&M University (FAMU) in Tallahassee in the fall of 1957.

During the summer of 1959, Due and her sister attended an interracial workshop on non-violent civil disobedience sponsored by CORE – The Congress of Racial Equality. After that, she organized FAMU students and led her sister and five others in a lunch counter sit-in. Thus began Due's life-long commitment to the civil and human rights struggles of black Americans.

In 1963, Patricia Stephens married FAMU law student, John D. Due, Jr., a prominent civil rights attorney. In 1964, Due was selected by CORE to serve as Field Secretary for the organization's first voter education and registration project in North Florida. Due's North Florida CORE Project registered more Blacks than any other region of the South.

Due continued to be involved with protest marches and boycotts after her successful voting rights work. Although,

she was suspended several times from FAMU for her activism, her speaking and fund-raising tours also interfered with her studies. Due did not receive her degree until 1967.

Due's dedication to the Civil Rights Movement has inspired a generation of young Black and White students to make extraordinary sacrifices to secure the rights protected in the Constitution for all Americans. Over the years, Due has given lectures, presentations, enactments and workshops on civil rights history to thousands of high school and college students, parents, teachers and to church and civic groups across the country.

Due co-authored with her daughter Tananarive Due, *Freedom in the Family: A Mother-Daughter Memoir of the Fight for Civil Rights* (ONE World/Ballantine, 2003). The book, too, is both a detailed history of the 1960's civil rights activism in Tallahassee and across Florida, and a personal, intimate and painful look at the sacrifices and consequences to one family who gave their lives to the Civil Rights Movement and progress. Due and her daughter chronicle the price of activism both on their family and on the families of other civil rights activists they knew and worked with.

FAMU awarded Due an honorary doctorate degree. She is also the recipient of the Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Outstanding Leadership, the Ghandi Award for Outstanding Work in Human Relations from FAMU and NAACP Florida Freedom Award.

She and her husband live in Quincy, Florida. They have raised three daughters: Tananarive Due, a prize winning novelist, Johnita Due Willoughby and Lydia Due Greisz, both attorneys-at-law.

Patricia Stephens Due passed away on February 7, 2012.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Patricia Stephens Due was conducted by Robert Hayden on October 17, 2006 and October 18, 2006, in Quincy, Florida, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civil rights activist Patricia Stephens Due (1939 - 2012) organized Florida A&M University students in lunch counter sit-ins in Florida and served as field secretary for CORE helping register more blacks to vote in north Florida at that time than any other region in the U.S.

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:

Due, Patricia Stephens

Hayden, Robert (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Due, Patricia Stephens--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 Patricia Stephens Due, October 17, 2006 and October 18, 2006. 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 Patricia Stephens Due, Section A2006_122_001_001, TRT: 0:27:20 ?

Patricia Stephens Due was born on December 9, 1939 in Gadsden County, Florida to Lottie Powell Stephens Hamilton and Horace Stephens, Sr. Stevens Due's maternal grandparents were divorced, and her mother was raised by her father, Richard Allen Powell, and stepmother on a 100-acre farm in Quincy, Florida. Stephens Due's grandfather had white relatives, which gave him privileges in town, but her mother refused to take advantage of them. In Quincy, Stevens Due's father owned a restaurant while in high school, and later a nightclub. Stephens Due's parents had three children together, including her sister, Priscilla Stephens Kruize, and her brother, Horace Stephens, Jr., before separating when she was four years old. She and her siblings lived for a time in Miami, Florida, where her mother designed window displays. They returned to Gadsden County to live with her maternal grandmother, Alma Peterson, and then moved to Belle Glade, Florida upon her mother's marriage to Marion M. Hamilton, a high school band teacher.

Video Oral History Interview with Patricia Stephens Due, Section A2006_122_001_002, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Patricia Stephens Due moved several times during her childhood in Florida. She began school at Anderson's Kindergarten in Miami, Florida, before moving to Quincy, Florida, where she attended William S. Stevens High School. After her family's subsequent move to Belle Glade, Florida, Stephens Due played trumpet in the band at Lake Shore Junior Senior High School, and was president of the student government. Stephens Due also persuaded her fellow students to sign a petition against an apathetic teacher who had not been held accountable by the school board. She was once sexually harassed by a postman at school, and her mother filed a complaint, but it was not investigated until the man harassed girls at a white school. Although they did not explicitly intend it as a demonstration, Stephens Due and her sister, Priscilla Stephens Kruize, often ordered from the segregated Dairy Queen's front window. Upon graduation, Stephens Due studied music at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University in Tallahassee, Florida.

Video Oral History Interview with Patricia Stephens Due, Section A2006_122_001_003, TRT: 0:31:10 ?

Patricia Stephens Due visited her father in Miami, Florida, while attending Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University in Tallahassee. In Miami,

Clifford “Baby” Combs invited her to a CORE conference, where she was instructed by activists like Gordon Carey, James T. McCain, Marvin Rich and James R. Robinson. Returning to Tallahassee, she founded a CORE chapter, and led the members, including William Carpenter, Henry Marion Steele, Charles Kenzie Steele, John Broxton and Barbara Broxton, in a demonstration at the local F.W. Woolworth Company store. They were arrested, and her fellow students expressed their support by organizing a much larger protest with over one thousand participants. Many were arrested during the subsequent march, while Stephens Due was led away by a fellow protestor after being attacked with tear gas. Following a delayed trial, she served forty-nine days in Tallahassee’s Leon County Jail, where she received letters of support, including one from baseball player Jackie Robinson.

Video Oral History Interview with Patricia Stephens Due, Section A2006_122_002_004, TRT: 0:28:50 ?

Patricia Stephens Due learned nonviolent protest methods from CORE workshops in 1959, and began demonstrating in Tallahassee, Florida. While imprisoned in Leon County Jail for sitting-in at a F.W. Woolworth Company store, she was visited by Anita P. Stewart, her teacher from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University. Upon her release, Stephens Due gave a lecture tour about her experiences, and then took a semester off from college to recover from her exhaustion. Stevens Due continued protesting, and was charged for fighting at a sit-in, although she had only watched as protestor Ben Cowins was attacked. The charges against her were dropped. In 1962, Stephens Due became a CORE field secretary, and registered voters in Gadsden County, Florida. In 1963, she married law student John Due, and was arrested two weeks later while protesting at Tallahassee’s Florida Theatre. Stevens Due recalls her husband’s support of her activism, and the tension between CORE, the NAACP and other civil rights organizations.

Video Oral History Interview with Patricia Stephens Due, Section A2006_122_002_005, TRT: 0:29:09 ?

Patricia Stephens Due travelled with her assistant, Judy Benninger, to several counties in Florida to register African American voters as a CORE field secretary. In Gadsden County, Stephens Due was hosted by her former teacher, Dorothy Chandler Jones, although Jones received many threats. Stephens Due faced gunfire while registering voters, but local law enforcement and the FBI refused to assist her. In 1963, her husband, John Due, joined the Florida bar, and became legal counsel to CORE. Stephens Due began advocating for workers’ rights in Florida, while her husband ran for U.S. Congress. Her husband also represented workers’ unions, and was suspended from the Florida bar as a reprisal. During this time, Stephens Due had three daughters, and moved her family to Miami, Florida seeking better schools. Later in her life, Stephens Due worked with her oldest daughter, Tannanarive Due, to write ‘Freedom in the Family,’ a memoir about her civil rights activity, and its impact on her children.

Video Oral History Interview with Patricia Stephens Due, Section A2006_122_002_006, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

Patricia Stephens Due and her oldest daughter, Tananarive Due, interviewed several civil rights activists for their book, ‘Freedom in the Family: A Mother-Daughter Memoir of the Fight for Civil Rights’. It was published by Ballantine Books, where they initially worked with editor Anita Diggs. Stephens Due talks about the importance of educating youth about the Civil Rights Movement. She often gave presentations at schools, where she shared her experiences, and required black and white students to reenact sit-ins and protests. Stephens Due

also describes her relationship with her sister, who lived in Ghana, and how it changed upon her sister's visit to the United States in 1966, when she was nearly attacked by a white server while pregnant. Stephens Due also reflects upon her life and legacy, and social activism at the time of the interview.

Video Oral History Interview with Patricia Stephens Due, Section A2006_122_002_007, TRT: 0:15:10 ?

Patricia Stephens Due narrates her photographs.