

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Valerie Jarrett

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Jarrett, Valerie, 1956-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Valerie Jarrett,
Dates:	December 13, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:00:49).
Abstract:	Real estate lawyer, city government appointee, and presidential advisor The Honorable Valerie Jarrett (1956 -) served as president of the Habitat Company, and was a former chairman of both the Chicago Transit Authority and the Chicago Stock Exchange. She was also the Senior Advisor to President Barack Obama, and Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Affairs and Public Liaison. Jarrett was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 13, 2006, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_165
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Lawyer, businessperson, and civic leader Valerie Bowman Jarrett was born Valerie Bowman, November 14, 1956, in Shiraz, Iran to education expert Barbara Bowman and Dr. James Bowman, a pathologist and pioneering geneticist. Her maternal grandfather was Chicago housing legend, Robert Taylor. Moving from Iran to London, Jarrett attended Tetherdown Elementary School. Returning to the United States, she attended Shaesmith University of Chicago Lab School and graduated from Northfield Mount Hermon School in Massachusetts in 1974. Jarrett received her B.A. degree in psychology from Stanford University in 1978 and obtained her J.D. degree from the University of Michigan Law School in 1981.

Beginning her career as a corporate banking associate at Chicago's Pope, Ballard, Shepherd, and Fowle, Jarrett then joined the real estate department of Sonnenschein, Carlin Nath and Rosenthal. In 1987, she was tapped to serve as deputy corporation counsel for finance and development for the City of Chicago under Mayor Harold Washington and continued service under Mayor Eugene Sawyer and Mayor Richard M. Daley. From 1988 to 1989, Jarrett also served as director of Leadership Greater Chicago. In 1991, she served as Mayor Daley's deputy chief of staff. Jarrett was appointed Chicago's commissioner of planning and development where she consolidated three departments and was awarded the Women's Business Development Center's Government Support Award. In 1995, Mayor Daley appointed her as chairman of the Chicago Transit Authority where she served for eight years and was responsible for a budget of over \$800 million. That same year, Jarrett was appointed Vice President of the Habitat Company. In 2003, Jarrett was elected to a three-year term as chairman of the Chicago Stock Exchange. In 2007, Jarrett was named president of the Habitat Company.

A longtime advisor of President Barack Obama, Jarrett served as co-chairperson of the Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Team. She is Senior Advisor and Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Affairs and Public

Liaison.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Valerie Jarrett was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 13, 2006, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Real estate lawyer, city government appointee, and presidential advisor The Honorable Valerie Jarrett (1956 -) served as president of the Habitat Company, and was a former chairman of both the Chicago Transit Authority and the Chicago Stock Exchange. She was also the Senior Advisor to President Barack Obama, and Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Affairs and Public Liaison.

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:

Jarrett, Valerie, 1956-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Jarrett, Valerie, 1956- --Interviews

African American women civic leaders--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

African American women lawyers--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

African American women executives--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

Presidents--United States--Staff--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Chicago

Occupations:

Real Estate Lawyer

City Government Appointee

Presidential Advisor

HistoryMakers® Category:

LawMakers|PoliticalMakers

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 The Honorable Valerie Jarrett, December 13, 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 The Honorable Valerie Jarrett, Section A2006_165_001_001, TRT: 0:29:01 ?

The Honorable Valerie Jarrett was born on November 14, 1956 to Barbara Bowman and Dr. James Bowman in Shiraz, Iran. Her maternal great-grandfather, Robert Robinson Taylor, was the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's first African American graduate. An architect, he designed the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute campus. Her grandfather, Robert Rochon Taylor, moved to Chicago, where he worked for the Chicago Housing Authority. Jarrett's mother was born in Chicago in 1928, and grew up in the Rosenwald Apartments. Jarrett's father was born in 1923 in Washington D.C., where his father was a dentist. In the 1940s, when he was a Howard University medical student, he met Jarrett's mother in Chicago, although he was initially interested in her sister, Laurantita Dugas. Jarrett spent her early childhood on the Nemazee Hospital compound in Shiraz. Her family relocated to London before returning to Chicago, where she attended Beulah Shoemith Elementary School and the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools.

African American physicians.

Family--History.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Valerie Jarrett, Section A2006_165_001_002, TRT: 0:28:54 ?

The Honorable Valerie Jarrett transferred from Chicago's Beulah Shoemith Elementary School to the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools in the fourth grade. In the 1960s, she was aware of national politics, but uninformed about Chicago's local politics. Jarrett went on to attend Northfield Mount Hermon School, a white, private boarding school in Gill, Massachusetts. Although her mother encouraged her to enroll at a liberal arts college, Jarrett matriculated at Stanford University in 1974. She majored in psychology, and studied under Philip Zimbardo and William C. Dement, and resided at Stanford's Black House, a diverse environment that contrasted with her living situation at Mount Hermon. After receiving her J.D. degree from the University of Michigan Law School in Ann Arbor in 1981, Jarrett joined the law firm of Pope, Ballard, Shepard and Fowle, Ltd. in Chicago. In August 1987, inspired by the Leadership Greater Chicago program, she joined the corporation counsel office under Mayor Harold Washington.

Washington, Harold, 1922-1987.

Stanford University--Alumni and alumnae.

University of Michigan. Law school--Alumni and alumnae.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Valerie Jarrett, Section A2006_165_001_003, TRT: 0:29:37 ?

The Honorable Valerie Jarrett joined Mayor Harold Washington's corporation counsel office three months before his death in November 1987, and witnessed the transition to Mayor Eugene Sawyer's administration. When Richard M. Daley became mayor of Chicago in 1989, Jarrett expected to be dismissed. However, she remained, and became Mayor Daley's deputy chief of staff in 1991. As deputy, she consolidated and then directed the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development. In 1995, after disagreements with staffers Gery Chico and Paul Vallas, Jarrett left Daley's administration to work for The Habitat Company, a community redevelopment organization. Jarrett describes the redevelopment of Chicago housing projects like Cabrini-Green Homes and Robert Taylor Homes, which were named for her maternal grandfather, Robert Rochon Taylor. She reflects upon the impact of Section 8 housing vouchers and the role of civil servants. Jarrett was also appointed as the chairperson of the Chicago Transit Authority in 1995.

City planners--Illinois--Chicago.

City planning—20th century.

Civic improvement--20th century.

Daley, Richard M.

Washington, Harold, 1922-1987.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Valerie Jarrett, Section A2006_165_001_004, TRT: 0:26:52 ?

The Honorable Valerie Jarrett was appointed as chairperson of the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) board by Mayor Richard M. Daley in 1995. She became the first African American chairwoman, a position that she held for eight years. During her tenure, the CTA refocused its efforts in customer service by emphasizing cleanliness, friendliness, reliability and safety. Jarrett also used Illinois Governor George Ryan's Fund for Infrastructure, Roads, Schools and Transit to upgrade the CTA's system and fleet. In addition to her redevelopment work with The Habitat Company, Jarrett served on the board for numerous organizations, including the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago and the Chicago Stock Exchange. She also talks about the career of Barack Obama, who was a U.S. senator at the time of the interview. Jarrett reflects upon her hopes and concerns for the African American community; her life and legacy; and how she would like to be remembered.

City planning—20th century.

Civic improvement--20th century.

Mass transit--Illinois--Chicago.

Mass transit--Social aspects.

Daley, Richard M.

Obama, Barack

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Valerie Jarrett, Section A2006_165_001_005, TRT: 0:06:25 ?

The Honorable Valerie Jarrett narrates her photographs.