

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Yvonne Sanders-Butler

---

## 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>	Sanders-Butler, Yvonne
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Yvonne Sanders-Butler,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 25, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:46:20).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Health advocate and elementary school principal Yvonne Sanders-Butler (1957 - ) became the principal of Browns Mill Elementary School in Lithonia, Georgia. She was the founder of Ennovy, an organization created to help ignite wellness and healthier lifestyles and the author of <i>Dessert Lovers Choice</i> and <i>Healthy Kids Smart Kids</i> . Sanders-Butler was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 25, 2007, in Ellenwood, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_109
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Yvonne Sanders-Butler was born on November 27, 1957 in Vaughan, Mississippi. Sanders-Butler is the daughter of Ruthie and West Sanders, and the stepdaughter of Otis Lee Sly. Educated in the Durant Public School System and graduating from high school in 1975, she received her B.S. degree in communications from Jackson State University in 1979, her M.A. degree in counseling from West Georgia College in 1992 and her Ph.D. from Jacksonville University in 2002.

Sanders-Butler's early years began as a radio personality. Later, she would hold positions in the collection and customer service industries until 1987. She began her career in education in 1987 with the DeKalb County School System. In 1995, Sanders-Butler became the principal of Browns Mill Elementary School in Lithonia, Georgia. As principal, Sanders-Butler became an advocate for student health care. After being admitted into the hospital for high blood pressure, Sanders-Butler was diagnosed with diabetes.

In 1998, Sanders-Butler began her healthy eating crusade at Browns Mill Elementary School. She created the first "Sugar Free Zone" in the United States, banned soft drinks, and instituted a new breakfast program that included oatmeal and other healthy foods. Sanders-Butler organized eating workshops, exercise classes for students and staff and worked to get local stores to carry nutritious snacks. Since the beginning of her crusade, student test scores have improved and disciplinary issues have declined. Nearly 100 teachers and administrators have contacted her about starting a similar program at their schools.

Sanders-Butler is the founder of Ennovy, an organization created to help ignite wellness and healthier lifestyles. She is the author of *Dessert Lovers Choice* and *Healthy Kids Smart Kids*.

Sanders-Butler and her husband live on their horse farm in Ellenwood, Georgia.

Sanders-Butler was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on March 25, 2007.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Yvonne Sanders-Butler was conducted by Denise Gines on March 25, 2007, in Ellenwood, Georgia, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Health advocate and elementary school principal Yvonne Sanders-Butler (1957 - ) became the principal of Browns Mill Elementary School in Lithonia, Georgia. She was the founder of Ennovy, an organization created to help ignite wellness and healthier lifestyles and the author of *Dessert Lovers Choice* and *Healthy Kids Smart Kids*.

---

## 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:

Sanders-Butler, Yvonne

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Sanders-Butler, Yvonne--Interviews

---

## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

## Occupations:

Elementary School Principal

---

## 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 Yvonne Sanders-Butler, March 25, 2007. 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 Yvonne Sanders-Butler, Section A2007\_109\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:20 ?

Yvonne Sanders-Butler was born on November 27, 1957 in Vaughan, Mississippi to Ruthie Waters Sanders and West Sanders. Both her parents came

from sharecropping families in Yazoo County, Mississippi. Her maternal grandmother was active in the Church of God in Christ until her death, which occurred when Sanders-Butler's mother was fifteen years old. Sanders-Butler's paternal grandmother, a seamstress, also died before Sanders-Butler was born. Sanders-Butler's parents married when her mother was fifteen years old and her father was eighteen years old. They had seven daughters, of which Sanders-Butler was the sixth; and one son, who died while in college. Sanders-Butler grew up in Mississippi, where she picked cotton with her siblings after school. She was influenced by her older sisters, especially Betty Sanders Mayfield; and, after crying when they left on the school bus, was allowed to begin school a year early. At a young age, Sanders-Butler's love of sweets earned her the nickname Sugar Woman.

Video Oral History Interview with Yvonne Sanders-Butler, Section A2007\_109\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:20 ?

Yvonne Sanders-Butler was raised by her mother, Ruthie Waters Sanders, while her father, Ruthie Waters Sanders, worked as a mechanic, and later as a car salesman. Sanders-Butler began kindergarten at Ebenezer Elementary School in Ebenezer, Mississippi, where she shot marbles to win her classmates' chocolate milk. She struggled with hyperactivity; and, at an early age, began a cycle of overeating and dieting that led to many health problems. Nevertheless, she was loved by her teachers, including Mary Alice West Tate, who paid for her to attend camp during the first grade. In the sixth grade, she moved with her family to Pickens, Mississippi, where she enrolled at the Durant Attendance Center. She was popular among her peers, and aspired to become a radio announcer. During breaks from school, Sanders-Butler picked cotton with her siblings, although she sometimes pretended that her family took vacations to northern cities, as her classmates did.

Video Oral History Interview with Yvonne Sanders-Butler, Section A2007\_109\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:20 ?

Yvonne Sanders-Butler grew up in Mississippi during the 1960s. Her parents, who were working class, supported the Civil Rights Movement, although they did not encourage their children to become involved at the time. Sanders-Butler attended a Baptist church with her family, and was sent on her own to participate in daily services at the nearby Church of God in Christ. She completed high school at the Durant Attendance Center, where she joined the cheerleading squad, and was viewed as a leader among her classmates. Upon graduating in 1975, Sanders-Butler matriculated at Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi; but often skipped classes, and decided to leave school after one semester. At that time, Sanders-Butler joined her older sister, Shirley Sanders, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where she found work at a retail store. However, she disliked the low pay and cold weather, and decided to return to Mississippi to finish her college degree.

Video Oral History Interview with Yvonne Sanders-Butler, Section A2007\_109\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

Yvonne Sanders-Butler graduated in 1979 from Jackson State University, where she studied radio broadcasting under deejay Herb Anderson. She married her childhood sweetheart, Floyd Butler; and worked for one year at the Durant Attendance Center. Sanders-Butler then spent a year working at WKKY Radio in Pascagoula, Mississippi, before moving to New Orleans, Louisiana. There, she worked in customer service until the birth of her son, Denard Butler. When her husband was laid off, Sanders-Butler moved with her family to Georgia, where she worked as an educational paraprofessional, before enrolling at the

West Georgia College. Sanders-Butler went on to work in multiple educational roles, including as a counselor and an instructional lead teacher. During this time, she struggled with overeating, and eventually suffered a stroke. She gained control of her eating habits after joining the Overeaters, Overcomes support group, and soon became the principal of Browns Mill Elementary School in Lithonia, Georgia.

Video Oral History Interview with Yvonne Sanders-Butler, Section A2007\_109\_001\_005, TRT: 0:28:20 ?

Yvonne Sanders-Butler improved her eating habits after suffering a nearly fatal stroke. During this time, she was the principal of Browns Mill Elementary School in Lithonia, Georgia. During her recovery, Sanders-Butler realized that the students' poor diet negatively affected their test scores, which were relatively low for the school's middle class demographics. In response, she instituted a sugar free campus in partnership with the teaching staff and Parent Teacher Association President Dorian Joyner. Although she received some resistance, she brokered an agreement between the parents, students and teachers to meet the school's new nutritional guidelines for food provided at school and brought from home. She also created wellness support for her employees. The changes led to higher test scores and the publication of Sanders-Butler's first book, 'Naturally Yours: Gourmet Desserts,' which was later republished as 'Dessert Lovers' Choice.' She also published the school's story in 'Healthy Kids, Smart Kids.'

Video Oral History Interview with Yvonne Sanders-Butler, Section A2007\_109\_001\_006, TRT: 0:24:30 ?

Yvonne Sanders-Butler created the schoolhouse oatmeal raisin cookie and other recipes from her 'Healthy Kids, Smart Kids' cookbook with her students at Browns Mill Elementary School in Lithonia, Georgia. She also sent samples of her food to Oprah Winfrey's café. In 2004, Sanders-Butler founded Ennovy, Inc., a wellness management company that provided nutritional support to schools and corporations. Additionally, Sanders-Butler talks about her husband, Floyd Butler; and her son, rodeo competitor Denard Butler. She describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community, and shares a message to future generations. Sanders-Butler concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.