

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Jeanne Brayboy

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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>	Brayboy, Jeanne, 1930-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Jeanne Brayboy,
<b>Dates:</b>	June 20, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:47:11).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Civil rights activist and school teacher Jeanne Brayboy (1930 - ) taught for forty years, and was the first African American teacher to integrate the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools in Charlotte, North Carolina. Brayboy was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 20, 2007, in Charlotte, North Carolina. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_179
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civil rights activist and school teacher Jeanne Martin Brayboy was born on February 23, 1930, in Camden, South Carolina. Her father, John Wendell Martin, was a high school teacher and football coach; and he started the first African American athletic conference in South Carolina. Her mother, June Singleton Martin, was a librarian. Brayboy and her younger sister, Thomasina, grew up under strict segregation, and they recognized the disparities between whites and blacks in Camden's educational system. She attended Mather Academy, an African American boarding school founded in 1867 by the Women's Division of the Northern Methodist Church in Camden, where the teachers stressed academic excellence and community responsibility. Brayboy graduated from Mather Academy in 1947.

Brayboy went on to attend Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina, as a music major, where she became active in the Bennett Choir among other campus activities. In 1951, Brayboy graduated from Bennett College with honors and received her B.A. degree in music. She entered Boston University to pursue her M.A. degree in music education. During her tenure at Boston University, Brayboy met Martin Luther King, Jr. Brayboy and King were a part of a small group of friends that attended black social gatherings on campus. She graduated from Boston University in 1953, and started her teaching career in Charlotte, North Carolina. In 1954, she married the late Dr. Jack Brayboy, who was an administrator at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Brayboy spent forty years as a teacher in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System, from 1953 to 1993. While she worked in the segregated Charlotte schools, she witnessed bus boycotts and sit-ins during the Civil Rights Movement. In 1969, Brayboy became one of the first African American teachers to integrate the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools. Brayboy retired in 1993.

The mother of two adult children, Jack and Joyce, Brayboy devotes her time to many civic organizations including the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, Levine Museum of the New South and the Foundation for the Carolinas. In

2011, Brayboy was awarded the Marie R. Rowe Award by the Symphony Guild of Charlotte, Inc.

Jeanne Martin Brayboy was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on June 20, 2007.

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# Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Jeanne Brayboy was conducted by Cheryl Butler on June 20, 2007, in Charlotte, North Carolina, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civil rights activist and school teacher Jeanne Brayboy (1930 - ) taught for forty years, and was the first African American teacher to integrate the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools in Charlotte, North Carolina.

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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:

Brayboy, Jeanne, 1930-

Butler, Cheryl (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Brayboy, Jeanne, 1930- --Interviews

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African American educators--North Carolina--Interviews.

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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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## Occupations:

Civil Rights Activist

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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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 Jeanne Brayboy, June 20, 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).

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## 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 Jeanne Brayboy, Section A2007\_179\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:49 ?

Jeanne Brayboy was born on February 23, 1930 in Camden, South Carolina to June Singleton Martin and John Martin. Her paternal grandmother died young, and her father was raised by his aunt, Jessie Dinkins Wright, after his father remarried. Brayboy's parents met while attending Albion Academy in Franklinton, North Carolina. After they married, Brayboy's father studied at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina, and became the first male teacher at Camden's Mather Academy, an African American boarding school founded by northern, white Methodist women. He also worked as a coach, and established the state's first African American athletic conference. Brayboy's mother was a librarian, and her great-aunt was a seamstress for white northerners who vacationed in Camden. There, Brayboy and her sister lived in a segregated neighborhood, but had friends in racially mixed communities. While a student at Mather Academy, she learned to play piano. She also belonged to Trinity Methodist Church.

African American families--South Carolina--Camden District.

African Americans--Education (Secondary)--South Carolina--Camden District.

Camden District (S.C.)--Race relations.

Video Oral History Interview with Jeanne Brayboy, Section A2007\_179\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:42 ?

Jeanne Brayboy grew up in Camden, South Carolina in a house that her white great-grandfather built for her great-grandmother, whom he kept as a second wife. In Camden, Brayboy attended Mather Academy, a strict Methodist school that did not allow dances until her senior year. Her father taught there until she was in the seventh grade, when he began teaching in the public schools of Columbia, South Carolina. Brayboy's father encouraged her to enroll at Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina. There, she studied music and music education, and belonged to the traveling choir. Bennett College had strict rules for the students, who were required to wear hats in public, follow a curfew, and wear skirts to class and church. In 1951, Brayboy graduated second in her class, and was awarded a scholarship from the Methodist church to attend Boston University. While studying for a master's degree, she met Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who was a doctoral student there, and they briefly dated.

African Americans--Education (Higher).

Boston University.

Bennett College (Greensboro, N.C.)--Students--Social life and customs.

African American children--South Carolina.

Music--Study and teaching (Higher).

Video Oral History Interview with Jeanne Brayboy, Section A2007\_179\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Jeanne Brayboy and Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. dated while they were students at Boston University. Brayboy had a limited social life, but enjoyed talking with her friends at King's apartment, and visiting Boston's museums. She worked towards a master's degree in the music school, where there were few African American students. Upon graduation, Brayboy was hired to teach music education in the elementary schools of Charlotte, North Carolina. There, she lived in McCrorey Heights, a black, middle class neighborhood named for Henry Lawrence McCrorey, the Johnson C. Smith University president who originally owned the land. At Charlotte's Myers Street School and Biddleville Elementary School, she taught a variety of spiritual, classical and popular music, and organized concerts for the students. Brayboy spoke with King the year before his death, when he visited Johnson C. Smith University. During school integration, Brayboy was reassigned to a white school, and was the only African American teacher.

School integration--North Carolina--Charlotte.

North Carolina--Charlotte--Race relations.

King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968.

Boston University--Race relations.

Video Oral History Interview with Jeanne Brayboy, Section A2007\_179\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:54 ?

Jeanne Brayboy's husband, Jack Brayboy, Jr., was a star football player at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina, and was the school's football coach when she met him in 1953. They married the next year, and he went on to earn a Ph.D. degree at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Their son, Jack Brayboy III, was born in 1958, and their daughter, Joyce was born in 1963. During the 1960s, Brayboy boycotted white department stores like Belk, and met with her longtime friend, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., when he spoke in Charlotte. In 1969, during school desegregation, she was reassigned to two white schools, Park Road Elementary School and Sedgefield Elementary School. While some parents complained, Brayboy did not experience hostility from students or other teachers. In 1976, Brayboy's husband died, and she retired from teaching seventeen years later. She became more involved in the community, and served on the board of the Foundation for the Carolinas.

Johnson C. Smith University.

Students--Political activity.

School integration--North Carolina--Charlotte.

Foundation for the Carolinas.

African American college students--Political activity.

Video Oral History Interview with Jeanne Brayboy, Section A2007\_179\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:38 ?

Jeanne Brayboy occasionally attended the opera with her husband, Jack Brayboy, Jr., during their marriage, and raised their children after his death in 1976. Brayboy worked as a music teacher in the schools of Charlotte, North Carolina for thirty-three years, and describes the city's growth in that time. After the school busing program was eliminated, she witnessed the re-segregation of Charlotte's schools. Brayboy remained active on the Johnson C. Smith University campus following her husband's death, and describes the changes in the university. At the time of the interview, Brayboy worked part time for the school's president, Dorothy Cowser Yancy. Brayboy lists her board memberships, which included the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, the Afro-American Cultural Center and the Levine Museum of the New South. She describes the museum's exhibit on Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, and recalls the reprisals against its plaintiffs in South Carolina. Brayboy also reflects upon her life and family.

Retirement--African Americans.

School integration--North Carolina--Charlotte.

African Americans--North Carolina--Charlotte--Social conditions--20th century.

School environment--North Carolina--Charlotte--21st century.

Segregation in education--North Carolina--Charlotte--History--20th century.

Video Oral History Interview with Jeanne Brayboy, Section A2007\_179\_001\_006, TRT: 0:22:08 ?

Jeanne Brayboy remembers the Ku Klux Klan and racial violence during her childhood in South Carolina. Brayboy describes her husband's U.S. military service, and their first home together on the campus of Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina. The couple bought a plot of land in

Charlotte's McCrorey Heights community, and built a house there in 1962. From that time, the value of the property increased, and more white residents moved to the neighborhood. Brayboy reflects upon her advice to future generations; her legacy; and how she would like to be remembered. She concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.

African American youth.

United States--Race relations.