

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Jamala Rogers

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Rogers, Jamala
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Jamala Rogers,
Dates:	October 16, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:28:50).
Abstract:	Community activist and newspaper columnist Jamala Rogers (1950 -) served as Director of the City of St. Louis' Office of Youth Development from 1993 to 2001. She founded the Organization for Black Struggle and writes for the St. Louis American. Rogers was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 16, 2007, in St. Louis, Missouri. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_290
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Newspaper columnist and community organizer, Jamala Rogers was born Terry Massey on October 11, 1950 in Kansas City, Missouri to Lollie Massey and Bennett Woodward Massey. Rogers attended Phillips, Ladd and Moore Elementary Schools and graduated from Central High School in 1968. An activist at Tarkio College, Rogers was a leader of the black student organization. She also tried to join the Kansas City chapter of the Black Panther Party during the time that its leader, Pete O'Neal, was leaving the country. After earning her B.A. degree in education in 1971, Rogers relocated to St. Louis, Missouri.

Rogers helped to found the St. Louis Chapter of the Congress of African People (CAP) under the leadership of Amiri Baraka in the 1970s. There, along with Haki Madhubuti, Kalamu Ya Salaam, Jitu Weusi and others, Rogers practiced a version of Maulana Karenga's black nationalist Kwaiaida Theory. She was also involved in the African Liberation Support Committee and the National Black Political Assembly. In 1980, Rogers joined Herbert Daughtry, Conrad Worrill and other black activists to form the Black United Front. The Organization for Black Struggle (OBS) was founded in St. Louis, Missouri in 1980 by Rogers and other community activists, students and union organizers to help the black working class and extol the principles of Black Power. OBS programs include community civic, youth, education and cultural arts activities from the African oriented Rowan Community Center.

In 1993, Rogers was appointed director of the City of St. Louis' Office of Youth Development by Mayor Freeman Bosley, Jr. and fostered innovative approaches to addressing youth services. She served in that capacity until 2001. During this period, Rogers also served as chairperson of the St. Louis Black Leadership Roundtable. In 1998, Rogers joined with Angela Davis, Bill Fletcher and 2,000 other activists to form the Black Radical Congress (BRC) in Chicago. The BRC is a grassroots network focusing on civil and human rights. Rogers has served in a number of leadership capacities with the BRC, including as a coordinating committee member and as national conference coordinator. In addition to being chairperson of OBS, she is co-chair of the Coalition Against Police Crimes and Repression (CAPCR) and sits on numerous boards of youth and education oriented agencies. Rogers is

a prolific contributor to websites and blogs and is also a featured contributing writer for The St. Louis American and an editorial board member of the Black Commentator. Her writing focuses on issues like Hurricane Katrina, the Jenna Six, police brutality and the environment. She is married to veteran civil rights activist Percy Green II.

Rogers was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on October 16, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Jamala Rogers was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 16, 2007, in St. Louis, Missouri, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Community activist and newspaper columnist Jamala Rogers (1950 -) served as Director of the City of St. Louis' Office of Youth Development from 1993 to 2001. She founded the Organization for Black Struggle and writes for the St. Louis American.

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:

Rogers, Jamala

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Rogers, Jamala--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Community Activist

Newspaper Columnist

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers|MediaMakers

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 Jamala Rogers, October 16, 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 Jamala Rogers, Section A2007_290_001_001, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Jamala Rogers was born on October 11, 1950 in Kansas City, Kansas to Lollie Odom Brashears and Bennett Massey, Sr. Her mother's family lived in poverty as sharecroppers on the Pineland Plantation in Newton, Georgia. Rogers' father was abandoned by his mother as a child, and raised by his aunt, Sadie Gibson in Thomasville, Georgia. He served in the U.S. Army, and qualified for the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944. After Roger's parents married, they moved to Kansas City, Missouri, where her father studied plumbing. Rogers and her mother shared a birthday, and were particularly close. In Kansas City, Rogers initially attended Wendell Phillips Elementary School, but later transferred to the integrated Milton Moore Elementary School. As a child, she read often, and played outside with her brother and four sisters, of whom she was the oldest. Rogers' parents divorced when she was twelve years old, and she moved with her mother and siblings to a home near Kansas City's Central High School.

Video Oral History Interview with Jamala Rogers, Section A2007_290_001_002, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Jamala Rogers' father sometimes refused to pay child support after her parents' divorce. Nevertheless, her mother ensured that Rogers and her siblings knew their father, as she did not have a relationship with her own father, who was white. She also avoided using corporal punishment, which had been routine in her childhood. While Rogers heard stories of racial discrimination from both her parents, they did not talk to her about the Civil Rights Movement. In Kansas City, Missouri, Rogers recalls the local black media outlets, such as the Kansas City Call and KPRS Radio, which played R&B and gospel music. Rogers' family attended the all-black St. Paul Presbyterian Church, where the leader of her Girl Scout troop also taught Sunday school. Rogers remembers the teachers who influenced her, as well as her activities at Central High School, where she was president of the student body. As a senior, Rogers aspired to teach, but received little help from her guidance counselors, who favored the light skinned students.

Video Oral History Interview with Jamala Rogers, Section A2007_290_001_003, TRT: 0:28:50 ?

Jamala Rogers had frequent conflicts with her strict stepfather, Lieutenant Colonel Virgil Brashears, Jr., but grew to respect his love of her mother. As the student body president at Central High School in Kansas City, Missouri, Rogers requested an assembly after Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination. The principal refused, and the students responded by organizing a walk-out. Rogers remembers the violence and the National Guard presence in Kansas City after Dr. King's death. To quell the unrest, the government allocated more resources to urban areas, through which Rogers secured a college scholarship. Rogers attended Tarkio College, a majority-white Presbyterian school in Tarkio, Missouri. She joined the school's black student union, which successfully occupied an administration building to demand an African American studies course and professor. She hoped to join Kansas City's Black Panther Party, but was regarded with suspicion, as government agents had begun to infiltrate the organization.

Video Oral History Interview with Jamala Rogers, Section A2007_290_001_004, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Jamala Rogers became interested in African history and culture as a freshman at Tarkio College in Tarkio, Missouri, and her enthusiasm grew at Communiversities classes at Northeastern Illinois University. On Saturdays, she regularly drove to Chicago to attend courses taught by psychologist Bobby E. Wright, and historians Anderson Thompson and Harold Pates. Upon graduating from Tarkio College, Rogers became a student teacher at Kansas City's Central

High School, where she was the only faculty member who wore African clothing. Then, Rogers moved with her partner, activist and African dance troupe member Percy Green II, to St. Louis, Missouri, where there was a vibrant cultural community, including the Black Artists Group (BAG). In 1972, Rogers and Green established a chapter of the Congress of Afrikan People in St. Louis. Rogers describes the group's history and mission, including Maulana Karenga's notion of kawaïda; as well as the organization's ideological shift towards Marxist-Leninism from 1974.

Video Oral History Interview with Jamala Rogers, Section A2007_290_001_005, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Jamala Rogers describes the transformation of the Congress of Afrikan People into the Revolutionary Communist League in 1974. Nationally, some members criticized the introduction of Marxism as a shift toward white ideology. Although some whites joined the organization, none became members of Rogers' chapter in St. Louis, Missouri, which changed very little. There, the group continued to live communally, and members began studying issues of misogyny and sexism, which had not been fully addressed by the Congress of Afrikan People. Rogers herself worked on issues of police brutality, prison support and education reform for the organization. In 1979, the Revolutionary Communist League merged with the League of Revolutionary Struggle. The next year, Rogers and Kalimu Endesha, another veteran of the Congress of Afrikan People, formed the mass-based Organization for Black Struggle. Later in 1980, Rogers' organization became a founding chapter of the National Black United Front in Brooklyn, New York.