

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lucy R. Wilson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Wilson, Lucy R., 1930-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Lucy R. Wilson,
Dates:	May 11, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:09:11).
Abstract:	Academic administrator Lucy R. Wilson (1930 -) served as a dean at Albany State College, Claflin College and Old Dominion University. She was also a professor of psychology at various universities including Tennessee State University and the University of Tennessee at Nashville. Wilson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 11, 2010, in Chesapeake, Virginia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_013
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Educational Administrator Lucy Wilson was born on September 23, 1930 in Hartsville, South Carolina. She received her B.S. degree cum laude from South Carolina State College in Orangeburg in 1951 and her M.S. degree in guidance and counseling from Indiana University in Bloomington in 1954. After completing her M.S. degree, Wilson served as the dean of women at Albany State College in Georgia from 1954 to 1956. While serving as a dean of students, her continuing studies were funded by the Danforth Foundation. Consequently, she received her Ed.D. degree in guidance and counseling in 1960.

She then returned to Orangeburg, South Carolina where she worked as the dean of students at Claflin College from 1956 through 1962. After completing her doctorate, Wilson was hired as the assistant program director for guidance services in the Department of Education and Testing Services at Princeton University from 1962 through 1967. In addition, Wilson was a professor of psychology at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana from 1964 through 1967. She then became the Director of Adult Services at the Tennessee Mental Health Department in Nashville, Tennessee until 1975. Since then, Wilson has served as the Associate Dean for the Darden School of Education at Old Dominion University. Over the years, Wilson has worked as a consultant for Princeton University, the Department of Health, Education, & Welfare and the Portsmouth Public School System in Virginia.

Wilson also serves on a number of community boards and has long been involved in service organizations. From 1975 to 1977, Wilson served as an Area Director for the National March of Dimes. She also served as the Chairperson for the Human Sexuality Task Force and sits on the board of directors for the Planning Council of Tidewater (Virginia).

Wilson is married to former Norfolk State University president Harrison Wilson and they have six children: April, Jennifer, Richard, John, Harrison, and Benjamin.

Lucy Wilson was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 11, 2010.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Lucy R. Wilson was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 11, 2010, in Chesapeake, Virginia, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Academic administrator Lucy R. Wilson (1930 -) served as a dean at Albany State College, Claflin College and Old Dominion University. She was also a professor of psychology at various universities including Tennessee State University and the University of Tennessee at Nashville.

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:

Wilson, Lucy R., 1930-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Wilson, Lucy R., 1930- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Old Dominion University Albany State College Claflin College Princeton University Tennessee. Mental Health, Dept. of

Occupations:

Academic Administrator

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 Lucy R. Wilson, May 11, 2010. 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 Lucy R. Wilson, Section A2010_013_001_001, TRT: 0:25:59 ?

Lucy R. Wilson was born on September 23, 1930 in Hartsville, South Carolina to Christine O'Neal Nicholson and Junius Reed. Wilson's maternal grandparents, Annie Young O'Neal and Seneca O'Neal, raised their family on a farm in rural Hartsville. Many of the women in the family moved to New York City for better work opportunities, leaving their children in the care of Wilson's grandmother. Wilson's mother obtained a sixth grade education, and was often teased for her fair complexion. At thirteen years old, she was raped by a local white farmer, and became pregnant with Wilson's brother, James O'Neal. When Wilson's parents married, her brother was sent to live with her maternal grandmother as her father refused to raise him. Wilson's paternal uncle, Lawrence Reed, was a prosperous presser at a successful dry cleaners. Wilson's parents had an abusive relationship, and her father left the family when she was eleven years old. Wilson's mother became a domestic worker for a local white woman named Miss Twitty.

Video Oral History Interview with Lucy R. Wilson, Section A2010_013_001_002, TRT: 0:29:29 ?

Lucy R. Wilson's backyard contained the local water pump, which served as a community gathering place as many of the homes in Hartsville, South Carolina did not have indoor plumbing. While Wilson's mother, Christine O'Neal Nicholson, was able to pass as white, Wilson was refused service in South Carolina's segregated areas. After Wilson's father, Junius Reed, left the family, Wilson's half-brother, James O'Neal, moved in with her, her mother, and younger brother, Junius Reed, having previously lived with their maternal grandmother. Wilson attended Butler Elementary School and Butler High School, which were named after the principal, Henry H. Butler. There, Wilson excelled in literature and was a skilled orator. Inspired by a family friend and neighbor, Wilson chose to enroll at the Colored Normal Industrial Agricultural and Mechanical College of South Carolina in Orangeburg, South Carolina. Her family could not afford the tuition expenses, so Wilson worked throughout college.

Video Oral History Interview with Lucy R. Wilson, Section A2010_013_001_003, TRT: 0:28:25 ?

Lucy R. Wilson attended the Colored Normal Industrial Agricultural and Mechanical College of South Carolina in Orangeburg, South Carolina. During the summers, Wilson found work in New York City through an employment agency. Wilson graduated cum laude with a degree in business administration, and was hired at the college as the secretary to the dean of the school of industrial arts. For two years, she worked at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington, D.C. She returned to Orangeburg to marry her first husband, who was a law professor at South Carolina State College. She worked as a secretary at the law school before becoming the dean of women at Albany State College in Albany, Georgia. She then was hired as the dean of students at Orangeburg's Claflin University. With financial aid from the Danforth Foundation, Wilson earned her master's and doctorate degrees at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana, and helped her siblings pay for their college education as well.

Video Oral History Interview with Lucy R. Wilson, Section A2010_013_001_004, TRT: 0:29:29 ?

Lucy R. Wilson met Harrison B. Wilson while studying for her doctorate degree at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. To fulfill a condition of her scholarship from the Danforth Foundation, she returned to Claflin University in Orangeburg, South Carolina as a dean of student services for two years. During this time, Wilson participated in a sit-in led by the NAACP to integrate the federal health department in Orangeburg. For a short period, Wilson and her daughter, Jennifer Wilson, lived to Idaho to expedite her divorce from her first

husband. After facing racial discrimination from a potential employer, she accepted a position with the Educational Testing System at Princeton University in Princeton, New Jersey. In 1964, she left there to work at Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where she reconnected with Harrison B. Wilson; and they married in 1967. Wilson then worked as a secretary at Lincoln High School in Sumter, South Carolina.

Video Oral History Interview with Lucy R. Wilson, Section A2010_013_001_005, TRT: 0:29:24 ?

Lucy R. Wilson moved to Idaho to work for a psychologist, but was ultimately turned away due to her race. Instead, she accepted a teaching position at Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. There, she became reacquainted with Harrison B. Wilson, whose first wife had recently died. The two married, and Wilson became the stepmother to his four sons. The family moved to Tennessee, where Wilson taught psychology at Tennessee State University and the University of Tennessee at Nashville. She later became the director of adult services for the State of Tennessee. When her husband became the president of Norfolk State College, she was hired as the director of the guidance and counseling department there. She left shortly after, and accepted a full professorship at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, becoming the first African American to join the faculty. Hostility from the university's president, James Koch, led to her early retirement in 1995.

Video Oral History Interview with Lucy R. Wilson, Section A2010_013_001_006, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Lucy R. Wilson founded Old Dominion University's public administration and urban services doctoral program, the first Ph.D. program offered there. As the director of the school of public services, she interviewed candidates, admitted students and reported to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. In her role as associate vice president of student services, she also mentored many students. Wilson was a member of various philanthropic and professional organizations such as the American Psychological Association, The Planning Council and The Links, Incorporated, developing their Links to Success program at Seatack Elementary School in Virginia Beach, Virginia. She also served as chairwoman of the March of Dimes Foundation, and was appointed to the school board of Norfolk, Virginia, where she protested busing and advocated for an increase in funding for majority black schools. Wilson describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Lucy R. Wilson, Section A2010_013_001_007, TRT: 0:15:55 ?

Lucy R. Wilson reflects upon her life and legacy. She also talks about her family, including her marriage with Harrison B. Wilson and their six children. Wilson concludes the interview by describing how she would like to be remembered.