

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ann Walker

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Walker, Theresa Ann
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ann Walker,
Dates:	June 24, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:15:48).
Abstract:	Civil rights activist Ann Walker (1928 -) participated in the Freedom Rides and the campaign to desegregate Birmingham, Alabama in 1963. Her husband, Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker, served as Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s chief of staff. Walker was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 24, 2010, in Chester, Virginia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_055
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civil rights activist Ann Walker was born in Freehold, New Jersey, on February 27th, 1928. Her mother, Mabel B. Edwards, was a seamstress, and her father, Robert Willard Edwards, worked in the trust department at Howard Savings. She attended Jefferson Junior High and Court Street School before Freehold High School in Freehold, New Jersey. For two years after her high school graduation in 1946, Walker attended Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia. In 1950, she married Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker, who would later serve as Chief of Staff for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and as executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) from 1960 to 1964. In 1951, Walker graduated from Howard University with her B.S. degree in accounting and economics, and one year later, her first child, Ann Patrice, was born. In the next five years, Walker would have three more children.

During the 1960s, Walker and her husband were very active in the Civil Rights Movement. In 1961, they participated in the Freedom Rides, for which Walker would spend a week in jail in Jackson County, Mississippi. Two years later, in 1963, during Martin Luther King Jr.'s campaign to desegregate Birmingham, Walker was beaten on Mother's day at the Gaston Motel by the National Guard.

In the 1970s, the Walkers lived in New York, where for thirty-seven years her husband, Dr. Walker, was Senior Pastor at Canaan Baptist Church of Christ in Harlem. During this time, Walker volunteered with the Westchester Foster Grandparents, serving one-on-one as a tutor and mentor to young people. She also served as board president for two terms at the Yonkers YWCA and as Mayor's Liaison to the Black Community in Yonkers. In 1975, after raising her children, Walker entered the workforce at North American Philips as the Branch Director of their credit union. She retired in 1989, and in 2004, when her husband also retired, the Walkers moved to Chester, Virginia.

Ann Walker was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on June 22, 2010.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Ann Walker was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 24, 2010, in Chester, Virginia, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Civil rights activist Ann Walker (1928 -) participated in the Freedom Rides and the campaign to desegregate Birmingham, Alabama in 1963. Her husband, Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker, served as Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s chief of staff.

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:

Walker, Theresa Ann

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Walker, Theresa Ann--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Civil Rights Activist

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Ann Walker, June 24, 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 Ann Walker, Section A2010_055_001_001, TRT: 0:28:34 ?

Ann Walker was born on February 27, 1928 in Freehold, New Jersey to Mabel Burke Edwards and Willard Edwards. Her maternal grandfather, Marcus Height, worked for the railroad, and married Betty Height. Each had four children from a previous marriage, and they went on to raise ten children together, including Walker's mother, who was born in Freehold in 1906. Walker's paternal grandfather, Paris Edwards, moved to Canada to make a living as a choir director; and, from that time, Walker's paternal grandmother raised Walker's father on her own in Newark, New Jersey. Walker's father studied for one year at New York University, and went on to work for the Howard Savings Bank in

Newark. After her parents met and married, Walker was raised in segregated Vauxhall, New Jersey during the Great Depression. She attended Vauxhall's Jefferson Elementary School, and was interested in art, literature and music. In 1938, Walker's parents separated, and she was sent to live with her maternal grandmother in Freehold.

Video Oral History Interview with Ann Walker, Section A2010_055_001_002, TRT: 0:26:29 ?

Ann Walker attended Freehold High School in Freehold, New Jersey, where she was one of a few black students. The school had no African American faculty, and did not permit the black students to join the sports teams. Walker also encountered racial discrimination in the school orchestra, where she played the piano and violin. After hearing that the instructor, Pearl Button, never awarded high grades to African Americans, Walker attempted to earn an A; but was assigned a B at the end of the semester, although she had earned the same test scores as a white student who received an A. Upon completing high school, Walker matriculated at Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia. She went on to earn a bachelor's degree in accounting from Howard University; and then worked briefly for Coleman, Parks and Washington, the firm of Washington, D.C.'s future Mayor Walter Washington. In 1950, Walker married Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker, with whom she had four children in the early 1950s.

Video Oral History Interview with Ann Walker, Section A2010_055_001_003, TRT: 0:31:44 ?

Ann Walker and her husband, Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker, were active in the Civil Rights Movement. They lived in Petersburg, Virginia while her husband completed his M.Div. degree at Virginia Union University. During this time, Walker's daughter, Patrice Walker Powell, was denied admission to the public schools after Walker refused to sign a form consenting to school segregation; and Walker and her family were ostracized for their activism by Petersburg's black community, who feared reprisal from their white employers. Walker eventually moved with her family to Atlanta, Georgia, where she hosted SCLC members like Dorothy Cotton and Bernard Lee at their home. In 1961, Walker participated in the Freedom Rides, and was jailed for one week in Jackson, Mississippi. In 1963, she was beaten by the National Guard in the aftermath of SCLC's Project C in Birmingham, Alabama. She and her four children were arrested upon returning to Atlanta, and contacted Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr. for help.

Video Oral History Interview with Ann Walker, Section A2010_055_001_004, TRT: 0:28:54 ?

Ann Walker was active with SCLC during the Civil Rights Movement, and attended the March on Washington in 1963. Eventually, Walker left the South, and moved with her husband, Reverend Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker, to Yonkers, New York, a segregated community where they experienced housing discrimination. Her husband served as the pastor of the Canaan Baptist Church of Christ in New York City's Harlem neighborhood; and, due to his role as a founder of the SCLC, became a professional associate of New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller. Walker's husband represented Governor Rockefeller at the Attica Correctional Facility following the prisoners' rebellion in 1971, and also served as a substitute pastor at Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church when Minister Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. was engaged in political work. Walker worked as a branch manager for the North American Philips Company from the mid-1970s. After she retired in 1990, she was invited to join The Links organization.

Video Oral History Interview with Ann Walker, Section A2010_055_001_005, TRT: 0:03:42 ?

Ann Walker reflects upon her legacy and how she would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Ann Walker, Section A2010_055_001_006, TRT: 0:16:25 ?

Ann Walker narrates her photographs.