

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Leona Barr-Davenport

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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>	Davenport, Leona Barr, 1957-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Leona Barr-Davenport,
<b>Dates:</b>	July 12, 2010
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2010
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:51:57).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Corporate chief executive Leona Barr-Davenport (1957 - ) was the president and CEO of the Atlanta Business League, an organization that served as an advocate for African American businesses in Metro Atlanta. Barr-Davenport was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 12, 2010, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2010_078
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Corporate chief executive Leona Barr Davenport was born November 30, 1957 in Hemingway, South Carolina. Her parents, Mary Leona Barr and Luther Rufus Barr, were sharecroppers. They had ten children. After graduating from high school in Johnsonville, South Carolina, Davenport went on to earn her B.S. degree in business administration and economics from Benedict College in 1979, winning the honor of being one of *Ebony* magazine's "Campus Queens of 1978-1979." In 1999, Davenport received the first Dean's Community Improvement Scholarship from Clark Atlanta University. She earned her M.B.A. degree with a concentration in marketing from Clark Atlanta in 2001.

After college, Davenport dove straight into the world of business, accepting a position as an accounting supervisor at Gencom, Inc. In 1984, she left Gencom and became a senior auditor at Broniec Associates, where she stayed until 1988. Davenport then became an assistant at the Atlanta Business League, an organization originally affiliated with Booker T. Washington that serves as an advocate for businesses owned by African Americans in the Atlanta area. Davenport worked her way to the top of the ABL, becoming president in 1998. She has held the position ever since. In 2009, Davenport accepted a Legacy Award from Spelman College on behalf of the Atlanta Business League.

Davenport has been active in community service throughout her career, starting with her decade-long affiliation with the Southwest Atlanta Youth Business Organization, or SWAYBO, which is sponsored by the Atlanta Business League. Davenport is also a member of Crossroads Community Ministries, which helps the homeless of Atlanta, and the Economic Development Corporation of Fulton County. In 2000, Davenport was honored for her community service by the Concerned Black Clergy of Metropolitan Atlanta during their Salute to Black Mothers Banquet.

Davenport lives in Sharpsburg, Georgia with her husband Jewel L. Davenport.

Leona Barr Davenport was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 12, 2010.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Leona Barr-Davenport was conducted by Denise Gines on July 12, 2010, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Corporate chief executive Leona Barr-Davenport (1957 - ) was the president and CEO of the Atlanta Business League, an organization that served as an advocate for African American businesses in Metro Atlanta.

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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:

Davenport, Leona Barr, 1957-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Davenport, Leona Barr, 1957- --Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

## The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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### Occupations:

Corporate Chief Executive

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### HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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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 Leona Barr-Davenport, July 12, 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).

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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 Leona Barr-Davenport, Section A2010\_078\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

Leona Barr-Davenport was born on November 30, 1957 in Hemingway, South Carolina to Mary Brown Barr and Luther Barr. Her paternal great-grandparents were slaves in Georgia, and her paternal grandparents, Mabel Barr and Benjamin Barr, Sr., worked as sharecroppers for a white family in Johnsonville, South

Carolina. After her paternal grandmother died, her paternal grandfather married Annie Barr, with whom he raised fifteen children. He worked on the farm until suffering an accident that led to the amputation of his leg; and, from that time, earned his living as a day laborer. Barr-Davenport's father attended school until the sixth grade, and then served in the U.S. Army Air Forces, where he was used as a test subject in military experiments that caused the permanent disfigurement of his skin. Barr-Davenport's maternal grandparents, Luella Rodgers Brown and Samuel Brown, Sr., also lived in Johnsonville, where they raised eight children. Her mother completed the eighth grade, then left school to work as a cook.

Video Oral History Interview with Leona Barr-Davenport, Section A2010\_078\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:27 ?

Leona Barr-Davenport was born in Hemingway, South Carolina, where she was the seventh of ten children. When she was three years old, her family moved to a house without running water in Johnsonville, South Carolina, where her father earned his living as a sharecropper on a white family's tobacco farm. As a child, she played with her cousins, who lived nearby and helped Barr-Davenport and her siblings with their chores. Her parents emphasized the importance of higher education, and also required the children to work on the farm from an early age. At this point in the interview, Barr-Davenport describes the process of cultivating tobacco. During the summer months, she and her siblings helped remove worms from the tobacco plants in the fields. After the harvest, when the plants were cropped and picked, they hung the leaves in the barn to cure. Later, Barr-Davenport helped separate the leaves of good quality for sale. Barr-Davenport also describes her siblings' educations and professions.

Video Oral History Interview with Leona Barr-Davenport, Section A2010\_078\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:49 ?

Leona Barr-Davenport attended the St. James Baptist Church in Johnsonville, South Carolina. There, her paternal grandfather, Benjamin Barr, Sr., served as the sexton, and her father sang with gospel quartet groups like the Johnsonville All Stars. When Barr-Davenport was five years old, she began her education at the all-black Stuckey School, where the students used secondhand books from a nearby white school. She excelled academically, and was influenced by the Coach Henry Sparrow, who recruited Barr-Davenport to manage the school's basketball team. She developed her leadership skills through this role, and went on to attend the integrated Johnsonville High School, where she once confronted a white student who refused to allow her to sit on the bus. Barr-Davenport was active in the drama club, and was selected by Principal Charles Graham to serve as the senior class co-president alongside a white male classmate. Barr-Davenport also recalls her parents' role in the voting rights movement.

Video Oral History Interview with Leona Barr-Davenport, Section A2010\_078\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:41 ?

Leona Barr-Davenport was encouraged to attend college by a white guidance counselor at Johnsonville High School in Johnsonville, South Carolina. After graduating, she received a full scholarship to attend the historically black Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina during the tenure of college president Henry Ponder. Barr-Davenport served as the secretary of the Student Government Association, and was inducted into the Alpha Kappa Mu Honor Society. During her senior year, she entered the Miss Benedict contest in protest of the competition's color bias, as the school had previously crowned only students of lighter skin tones. Barr-Davenport was elected as Miss Benedict and featured in Ebony magazine. She graduated with a degree in economics in 1979, and moved to Atlanta, Georgia, where she was hired as an accounting supervisor

at GenCom, a majority-white firm. In 1984, Barr-Davenport joined Broniec Associates, Inc., an auditing company in Stone Mountain, Georgia.

Video Oral History Interview with Leona Barr-Davenport, Section A2010\_078\_001\_005, TRT: 0:28:52 ?

Leona Barr-Davenport was hired as an accounts payable auditor in 1984 at the firm of Broniec Associates, Inc. in Stone Mountain, Georgia. She experienced discrimination from her white male colleagues; and, after being denied a promotion in 1988, left the position. She was recruited to the Atlanta Business League (ABL) by Vice President Ed Menifee, and initially served as his executive assistant, and later as the organization's assistant director. Barr-Davenport became the manager of member services in 1990, under the new president, Valerie Montague. In 1994, Barr-Davenport assisted with the publication of the first Atlanta's Top 100 Black Women of Influence list. She was named the acting president of the ABL in 1997, and was then selected to serve as president by the board chairman, Thomas W. Dortch, Jr. In this role, Barr-Davenport created the Women of Vision Breakfast to honor black female business owners. She describes the history and mission of the ABL, and recalls meeting her husband, Jewel Davenport.

Video Oral History Interview with Leona Barr-Davenport, Section A2010\_078\_001\_006, TRT: 0:25:28 ?

Leona Barr-Davenport enrolled at Clark Atlanta University in Atlanta, Georgia in 1999, and completed a master's degree in marketing in 2001. As the president of the Atlanta Business League, Barr-Davenport successfully advocated for affirmative action programs for minority business owners in the City of Atlanta under Mayor Bill Campbell. During this time, Barr-Davenport was also involved with the Atlanta Youth Business Organization and The Concerned Black Clergy of Metropolitan Atlanta, which later presented her with the President's Award for her promotion of affirmative action programs. Barr-Davenport reflects upon her life, legacy and family. She shares her aspirations for the future of her career, and her advice for future generations. Barr-Davenport also talks about the multigenerational effects of racial discrimination.