

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Eleanor Jones

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Jones, Eleanor, 1929-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Eleanor Jones,
Dates:	February 7, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:52:41).
Abstract:	Math professor and mathematician Eleanor Jones (1929 - 2021) was the eleventh African American woman to receive her Ph.D. degree in mathematics and served as professor of mathematics at Norfolk State University for over thirty years. Jones was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 7, 2012, in Virginia Beach, Virginia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_024
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Mathematician and professor of mathematics, Eleanor Jones was born on August 10, 1929 in Norfolk, Virginia. Her mother, Lillian Vaughn Green, was a domestic worker, and her father, George Herbert Green, was a letter carrier. She attended Booker T. Washington High School where her favorite subject was mathematics. Jones graduated as valedictorian of her class at the age of fifteen and received a scholarship to attend Howard University. Jones received her B.S. degree in mathematics in 1949. She studied under Elbert Cox, the first African American to receive his Ph.D. degree in mathematics. Jones remained at Howard University where she received her M.S. degree in mathematics in 1950. Then, she returned to Booker T. Washington High School as a mathematics and science teacher for two years.

Jones was hired in 1955 as an associate professor of mathematics at Hampton University. When schools in Norfolk, Virginia were closed in 1958 due to forced integration, Jones helped tutor students in a local church. That same year, she also became vice chair of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in Virginia. By 1962, Jones left Hampton to study mathematics at Syracuse University under the tutelage of Dr. James Reid. In 1965, she was elected to the Sigma Xi science honor society and went on to graduate from Syracuse University in 1966 as the eleventh African American woman to earn her Ph.D. degree in mathematics. Her thesis, entitled, "Abelian Groups and Their Endomorphism Rings and the Quasi-Endomorphism of Torsion Free Abelian Groups," examined advanced abstract algebraic concepts. In 1967, Jones rejoined the faculty at Hampton University. One year later, she became professor of mathematics and chair of the department at Norfolk State University.

Jones retired as professor emeritus from Norfolk University in 2003. She served on the Committee for Opportunities for Underrepresented Minorities of the American Mathematical Society, the Executive board of the Association for Women in Mathematics and the Board of Governors for the Mathematical Association of America. Jones also held the position of vice president of the National Association of Mathematicians. She raised three sons, Everett B. Jones, Edward A. Dawley and the late Herbert G. Dawley.

Eleanor Jones was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 7, 2012.

Jones passed away on March 1, 2021.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Eleanor Jones was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 7, 2012, in Virginia Beach, Virginia, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Math professor and mathematician Eleanor Jones (1929 - 2021) was the eleventh African American woman to receive her Ph.D. degree in mathematics and served as professor of mathematics at Norfolk State University for over thirty years.

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:

Jones, Eleanor, 1929-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Jones, Eleanor, 1929- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Mathematician

HistoryMakers® Category:

ScienceMakers

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 Eleanor Jones, February 7, 2012. 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 Eleanor Jones, Section A2012_024_001_001, TRT: 1:29:40 ?

Eleanor Jones was born in Norfolk, Virginia in 1929. Her mother, Lillian Louis Vaughn, was born in Norfolk in 1901. Vaughn attended St. Francis De Sales High School, and went on to work as a domestic. Jones' father, George Green,

was born in Norfolk in 1898. He served in the U.S. Navy in World War I, but went on to become a mail carrier with the U.S. Postal Service. Green met Vaughn in Norfolk, and the two eventually married after knowing each other for many years. They settled in an area of Norfolk called Washington Heights and raised their family there.

Affirmative action programs.

Affirmative action programs.

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Affirmative action programs.

Video Oral History Interview with Eleanor Jones, Section A2012_024_001_002, TRT: 2:29:34 ?

Eleanor Jones was raised in the Norfolk, Virginia area. Her parents, George and Eleanor Green, married in 1923. They settled in the Washington Heights area of Norfolk, and had six children. Jones has memories of going to church, the circus, and baseball games. As a child, Jones enjoyed paying hopscotch and dodge ball. She attended Douglas Park Elementary School for her early years and later went on to attend Paul Lawrence Dunbar. At this time, Jones was influenced by Ms. Davidson, who exposed her to classical literature. In seventh grade, Jones attended Booker T. Washington High School, where she remembers being a good student and demonstrating an early interest in math. Jones excelled in math because of her tenacity.

Affirmative action programs.

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Video Oral History Interview with Eleanor Jones, Section A2012_024_001_003, TRT: 3:30:27 ?

Eleanor Jones was a strong student, but also had a full social life as a high school student. While attending Booker T. Washington High School, Jones was active with a student group called the Iotas, which hosted social events. Jones graduated as class valedictorian in 1945, and was awarded a scholarship from the Pepsi Cola Company. Her scholarship covered her full tuition, plus a \$25 monthly stipend, and allowed her to attend Howard University, where she used the stipend to pay her living expenses. At Howard University, Jones had the opportunity to hear a number of well-known speakers, including Mary Church Terrell, Nannie Helen Burroughs, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Langston Hughes. Attending Howard University also afforded her the opportunity to learn from Howard University's distinguished faculty, including Dr. David Blackwell, Dr. Lawrence Robinson, and Dr. Elbert Cox. Jones also pledged Delta Sigma Theta Sorority during her years at Howard University.

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Video Oral History Interview with Eleanor Jones, Section A2012_024_001_004, TRT: 4:32:21 ?

Eleanor Jones was a strong student at Howard University, and was offered a fellowship to complete her M.S. degree under the direction of Dr. Jeremiah Certaine. Jones then began working at the census bureau. Shortly thereafter,

Jones returned to Norfolk, Virginia to teach at Hampton University. There, she met and married Edward Dawley, Jr. Dawley was a lawyer, and worked with the famous case integrating Norfolk's public schools. Dawley and Jones were active with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), where Jones served as the vice-chair. Jones tutored the children that integrated Norfolk's schools while she taught at Hampton University. During this time, Edward Dawley rekindled his relationship with his high school sweetheart, leaving Jones to raise their children alone. Jones then went to Syracuse University to pursue her Ph.D. degree.

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Video Oral History Interview with Eleanor Jones, Section A2012_024_001_005, TRT: 5:28:59 ?

Eleanor Jones attended Syracuse University for her doctoral studies. She wrote her dissertation on abelian groups and elements. She completed her Ph.D. degree in 1966, becoming the first African American woman to earn a Ph.D. degree in mathematics from Syracuse University. Upon completion of her degree, she returned to Hampton University to teach. Jones then joined the faculty of Norfolk State University, where she had the opportunity to mentor many students, including Gerline Dodd. Jones has also served as the Virginia State Representative of the National Association of Mathematicians. In addition, Jones represented the state of Virginia for the National Science Foundation Women in Science Career Workshop Grant, which worked to increase the number of females in math and science. After a successful teaching career, Jones retired from Norfolk State University in 2003.

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Video Oral History Interview with Eleanor Jones, Section A2012_024_001_006, TRT: 6:21:40 ?

Eleanor Jones invested in the lives of students at Hampton University and at Norfolk State University. She feels that her legacy is her achievement, demonstrating that African Americans can succeed in math if they so choose. Jones feels that students, particularly African American students, are not actively seeking opportunities to further their education in mathematics. When she reflects upon her life, Jones regrets not encouraging her second child to pursue his dream of a career in mathematics. While her second child has passed away, she has two remaining children. Jones would like to be remembered as a peaceful and resourceful person. Finally, Jones describes her photographs.

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