

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Audrey Peeples

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Peeples, Audrey, 1939-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Audrey Peeples,
Dates:	August 25, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:00:00).
Abstract:	Association chief executive and nonprofit chief executive Audrey Peeples (1939 -) served as the CEO of the YWCA and the executive director of the Girls Scouts of Chicago. Peeples was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 25, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_203
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Former YWCA executive and women's rights advocate Audrey R. Peeples was born in Chicago on May 22, 1939 to Thelma and John Rone. For nearly thirty years, she has held leadership positions with some of Chicago's - and the country's - preeminent women's organizations.

Raised in Chicago, Peeples earned her B.A. degree in 1961 from the University of Illinois at Champagne. After twelve years working as a trust manager for Continental Bank, she became associate regional director for Girl Scouts USA in 1973. Three years later, she rose to executive director of the Girl Scouts of Chicago, and held the position until September 1987. At that time, she left the Girl Scouts to become CEO of the Young Women's Christian Association.

Under Peeples' leadership, the YWCA made significant inroads into helping improve the lives and rights of women. Peeples spearheaded efforts to end racist practices within the organization as well as to expand the YWCA's childcare initiative. Additionally, she promoted violence and pregnancy prevention for children and young teens, and introduced new cancer education and screening programs for women. Peeples' stewardship also saw the agency's annual budget quadruple, from \$3 million to \$12 million, enabling the YWCA to extend its offerings. In anticipation of her retirement, Peeples successfully recruited Patricia Ireland, former president of the National Organization for Women, to succeed her in 2001.

Peeples is currently the co-chair of the Alumnae Council of the Chicago Foundation for Women, and a member of the Executive Committee of the Chicago Community Trust. She has served on the Board of the Executive Services Corps, and as vice president of the ACLU of Illinois. She is on the Dean's Advisory Board of the School for New Learning at DePaul University, and is a member and past chair of the Chicago Network, an affiliate of the International Women's Forum. Peeples has also served on the Board of Directors of the United Way of Chicago the Chicago Foundation for Women, Junior Governing Board of the Chicago Symphony, and Girl Scouts of the USA.

She is the recipient of the Thomas and Eleanor Wright Award from the City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations for her work on the YWCA's Racial Justice Program.

Peeples was married for twenty-nine years to Anthony Peeples, who died in 2001. They have two children, Jennifer and Michael. Peeples lives in Chicago.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Audrey Peeples was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 25, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Association chief executive and nonprofit chief executive Audrey Peeples (1939 -) served as the CEO of the YWCA and the executive director of the Girls Scouts of Chicago.

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:

Peeples, Audrey, 1939-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Peeples, Audrey, 1939- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Young Women's Christian Association

Occupations:

Association Chief Executive

Nonprofit Chief Executive

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 Audrey Peeples, August 25, 2003. 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 Audrey Peeples, Section A2003_203_001_001, TRT: ?

Audrey Peeples was born on May 22, 1939 in Chicago, Illinois. Her mother, Thelma Shepherd Rone, was born in Woodville, Mississippi in 1899 to Berthold Layman and Emaline Montgomery. Peeples' maternal grandfather was a British plantation owner in Mississippi who owned the county's largest plantations and was killed after being struck by lightning. Thelma Shepherd Rone migrated to New Orleans, Louisiana as a teenager and later to Chicago with her brother. She did not finish high school and attended night school briefly at Wendell Phillips Academy High School in Chicago. Peeples' father, John Drayton Rone was born in 1900 in Haynesville, Louisiana. Her paternal grandfather worked as a coachman and later as a schoolteacher in Shongaloo, Louisiana. John Drayton Rone migrated to Chicago in 1919 and settled in the Black Belt. He worked for Armstrong Painting and later for Mealy Printing Press. Peeples was raised on Chicago's South Side; she describes her childhood activities, interests, and religious experiences.

Video Oral History Interview with Audrey Peeples, Section A2003_203_001_002, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Audrey Peeples' parents did not believe in organized religion and her father distrusted ministers. Peeples describes her favorite childhood radio shows including 'Fibber McGee and Molly,' 'Amos 'n' Andy' and 'Inner Sanctum Mystery.' She attended John B. Drake Elementary School in Chicago, Illinois and graduated in January of 1953, six months ahead of her expected graduation. Peeples attended Wendell Phillips Academy High School in Chicago and describes having a rich academic experience as well as difficulty socially, having been displaced from her original class. She joined the Negro History Club, run by librarian Virginia F. Toles; became editor of the yearbook and newspaper; and was taught English by Maceo T. Bowie, who later became president of Kennedy-King College in 1970. Peeples attended the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1957. She recalls being the only black freshman in her dorm and had few memorable professors. Peeples earned her B.A. degree in English in 1961.

Video Oral History Interview with Audrey Peeples, Section A2003_203_001_003, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Audrey Peeples earned her B.A. degree in English from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1961. In college, she remembers little civil rights activity on campus. She was hired by Continental Bank's management training program and enrolled in graduate school at the expense of the bank earning an MBA from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois in 1970. While at Continental, she was chosen to supervise the world's first electronic stock transfer. Peeples married in 1971 and gave birth to her first child. After having her child, Continental bank did not take her seriously and she felt her career stalling. In 1973, she accepted a position as associate regional director over a seven state region for the Girls Scouts and eventually became executive director of the Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago. In 1987, she joined the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago as CEO. The YWCA has a history of addressing women's issues and racial injustice. Peeples describes her father's skepticism towards integration.

Video Oral History Interview with Audrey Peeples, Section A2003_203_001_004, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Audrey Peeples was named CEO of the YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago in 1987. She describes the significance of the Harriet M. Harris YWCA on Chicago's South Side, and challenges she faced as CEO, including the community's reluctance to address issues like racism and sexual assault, and the

shortage of female chief executives. As CEO, Peeples revitalized the YWCA's Women of Achievement Leader Luncheon. By the time of her departure, the event was raising \$700,000 annually. She describes the history, mission and future of the YWCA; lists YWCAs in the surrounding Chicagoland area; and talks about the history of Jane Addams' Hull House. At the time of the interview, the YWCA had been collaborating with the Urban Institute to impact legislation corresponding to its core values. In 2003, The YWCA named Patricia Ireland as CEO and received criticism from the Christian right-wing because of her sexual orientation and stance on abortion. Peeples describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Audrey Peeples, Section A2003_203_001_005, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Audrey Peeples remembers her father's run-in with "Two-Gun Pete," a Chicago policeman notorious for carrying two guns. Peeples reflects upon her legacy; describes how she would like to be remembered; and concludes by narrating her photographs.