

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Madeline Stratton Morris

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Morris, Madeline R. Stratton, 1906-2007
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Madeline Stratton Morris,
Dates:	August 28, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:36:48).
Abstract:	Curriculum specialist and elementary school teacher Madeline Stratton Morris (1906 - 2007) was a lifelong educator responsible for the introduction of African American history in Chicago public schools. Morris was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 28, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_209
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

African American history was absent from the curriculum in Chicago's public schools until Madeline R. Stratton Morris added it in 1941. She was born in Chicago on August 14, 1906, the oldest of six children, and spent her career making a mark on Chicago's educational system.

Stratton Morris received her certificate in elementary school teaching from Chicago Teachers College and began teaching at Emerson School in 1933. She earned her B.S. degree in education from Northwestern University in 1941 and five years later received her M.S. degree from the same school. Stratton Morris also did post-graduate work at the University of Chicago from 1942 to 1946.

While working as a social studies teacher, Stratton Morris tackled several special assignments pertaining to curriculum, youth development and human relations. From 1958 to 1960, she served on the Human Relations Committee of the Chicago Board of Education. After leaving the public school system in 1968, Stratton Morris worked with several universities, teaching African American history at Mayfair College, supervising practice teachers at Chicago State University, and developing social studies curricula at Governors State University.

In addition to her dedication to education, Stratton Morris was active with several civic groups. She served as president of the Chicago chapter of the National Council of Negro Women, worked on the Mayor's Commission on Human Relations and attended the 1980 Democratic National Convention as a delegate. The National Negro Museum and Historical Foundation, the National Council of Negro Women and Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority have all honored her for her service to education and community. Stratton Morris has also published three books on African American history, as well as several magazine articles.

Travel has been a lifelong passion of Stratton Morris. She island-hopped in the Caribbean, took a world tour of seventeen countries while on sabbatical in 1967, visited Mexico and traveled to the Soviet Union. Stratton Morris married twice. She was married to Samuel B. Stratton for twenty-six years until his death in 1972, and was married

two and a half years to Walter Morris before he died in 1983.

Stratton Morris passed away on December 26, 2007 at the age of 101.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Madeline Stratton Morris was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 28, 2003, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Curriculum specialist and elementary school teacher Madeline Stratton Morris (1906 - 2007) was a lifelong educator responsible for the introduction of African American history in Chicago public schools.

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:

Morris, Madeline R. Stratton, 1906-2007

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Morris, Madeline R. Stratton, 1906-2007--Interviews

African American educators--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

Elementary school teachers--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

Universities and colleges--Faculty--Interviews

Urban elderly--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Chicago Public Schools

Chicago Public Schools

Occupations:

Curriculum Specialist

Elementary School Teacher

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 Madeline Stratton Morris, August 28, 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 Madeline Stratton Morris, Section A2003_209_001_001, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Madeline R. Stratton Morris was born on August, 14th, 1906 in Chicago, Illinois. Morris' mother, Estella Dixon Robinson, was born in Zanesville, Ohio in the late 19th century. Morris' maternal grandmother was illiterate, but good with money, and worked for the wealthy Meade family. Morris' mother attended Raymond Elementary School in Chicago, Illinois, but did not finish high school. She was sixteen years old when Morris was born. Morris' mother was primarily a homemaker, though she worked briefly at a pencil shop where Morris herself sometimes worked during the summers. Morris' father, John Robinson, was born in Ronceverte, West Virginia in the 1880s. Though he never attended high school, Robinson expected his children to receive the education he had not. Morris recalls that her father taking her to visit a book store at 51st and State streets in Chicago.

African American educators--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Elementary school teachers--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Universities and colleges--Faculty--Interviews.

Urban elderly--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Madeline Stratton Morris, Section A2003_209_001_002, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Madeline Stratton Morris' father, John Henry Robinson, worked for the Butler Bros., a wholesale corporation in Chicago, Illinois, as the owners' trusted man to handle business while the owners were away from the city. Morris' family lived in a house on Dearborn Street where the roads were unpaved-- during that period city streets were constructed from leveled tree trunks. Growing up near the Chicago stockyards in the first part of the twentieth century meant Morris interacted with both African American and white children. She played frequently with a white friend, though she was unable to go inside her friend's house. As a girl, Morris liked to teach. Her first experience teaching were teaching Sunday school at Berean Baptist Church. Morris attended Farren School in Chicago where most of her teachers were Irish or Jewish. In school she loved to read and when she was in first grade the principal moved her into a more advanced class.

Video Oral History Interview with Madeline Stratton Morris, Section A2003_209_001_003, TRT: 0:26:55 ?

Madeline Stratton Morris remembers the Chicago race riot of 1919 which began at 31st Street Beach and lasted for multiple weeks. She remembers one African American man in her community was shot and another group of African American men stood on a viaduct with guns to prevent white people from

threatening the community. During the riot, her father communicated with the other men on their block through the living room window. Morris attended Englewood High School in Chicago. Though Englewood was integrated, African American students were discriminated against. Morris remembers being required to enter through the back of the school and being forced to walk by herself at graduation. After graduating from high school in the early 1920s, Morris went to Chicago Teachers College. She began her teaching career at Emerson School on the West Side of Chicago where she was one of a handful of black teachers and consistently progressed through the school's ranks. She taught at Emerson for sixteen years.

Video Oral History Interview with Madeline Stratton Morris, Section A2003_209_001_004, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Madeline Stratton Morris spearheaded a national and Illinois statewide campaign to incorporate African American history into school curricula during the 1940s. Legislation introduced by Illinois state representative Corneal A. Davis stipulated that Illinois schools "may" incorporate African American history into their curricula; however, the legislation avoided signifying the curriculum as mandatory. In 1946, Morris' close friend and colleague Carter G. Woodson, founder of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, wrote Morris, urging her revive the Association's Chicago chapter. Morris was also close to influential African American leaders such as, lawyer Edith S. Sampson, NAACP executive secretary Walter Francis White, HistoryMaker John Hope Franklin, HistoryMaker Margaret Burroughs and Civil Rights activist Mary McLeod Bethune.

Video Oral History Interview with Madeline Stratton Morris, Section A2003_209_001_005, TRT: 0:31:13 ?

Madeline Stratton Morris wrote a textbook, 'Negroes who helped build America,' highlighting important and influential African Americans in U.S. history. The textbook was published by Massachusetts-based Ginn & Company in 1965. In 1973, Morris wrote a second book, 'Strides forward: Afro-American biographies,' which features biographies of nine African Americans, including HistoryMakers John Hope Franklin and Gordon Parks. While Morris was in Moscow on a book tour sponsored by the Association for the Study of African American Life and History in 1975, she had an uncomfortable experience with a USSR Army officer. Morris describes her hopes for the African American community, and she reflects upon her legacy as an educator and writer of African American history. Morris concludes the tape by narrating her photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Madeline Stratton Morris, Section A2003_209_001_006, TRT: 0:09:30 ?

Madeline Stratton Morris narrates her photographs.