

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Barbara Dodson Walker

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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>	Walker, Barbara D.
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Dodson Walker,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 4, 2004
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2004
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:18:44).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Education administrator and historical researcher Barbara Dodson Walker (1930 - ) served the D.C. Public Schools as an elementary resource teacher, coordinator of the Title I program, and curriculum developer in reading and language arts. After retiring from the school system in 1983, she became involved in numerous projects designed to develop and maintain the records of African American history. Walker was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 4, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2004_015
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

An expert in the study and recordation of African American life and history, Barbara Dodson Walker was born January 18, 1930 in Washington, D.C. She grew up in the Georgetown area, which, at that time, had a large African American community. Schools were segregated, but Walker felt that she had the best education possible. She earned a B.S. in elementary education at Miner Teachers College in 1951, and an M.Ed. in 1972 from Federal City College. Walker pursued additional graduate work at Purdue University and the University of the District of Columbia.

During her thirty-two year career in education (1951-1983) Walker served in the D.C. Public Schools in several assignments, including coordinator of the Title I program with an emphasis in the multicultural population; resource teacher in the vital development of the critical reading and math programs for young children; and testing chairperson charged with developing standards for basic skills.

It was through her marriage to James Dent Walker that she nourished her interest in the recording of history and historical documents. Her husband would eventually serve as the director of local history & genealogical programs at the National Archives. After his retirement in 1979, he went to work at the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), and became involved in a project to identify the African Americans who were involved in the American Revolution. Walker assisted her husband in the preparation of the Rhode Island Patriots, a segment of this project. His work there was a result of an African American wanting to join a chapter of the DAR and not be an at-large member of the DAR.

After her retirement from D.C. Schools, Walker participated in many diverse research projects. She indexed the first ten years of the *Journal of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society* and researched the history

of the D.C. Schools and the Epiphany Catholic Church of Georgetown for *Black Georgetown Remembered*. She researched and wrote essays of the Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School and Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives, both located in Washington, DC. This work appeared in the *Journal of Negro Education*. Walker is developing a curriculum for students in the elementary grades to assist them in writing their family histories.

Walker is a charter and life member of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, Inc. and has worked on behalf of the Society in many capacities. This is the only national organization involved in documenting African American's family history and genealogy. She serves as the national president and in so doing has made many contributions to its sustenance. There are now twenty-three chapters of this Society across the nation. Walker has served also on the boards of Georgetown Heritage Trust, where she coordinated the documentation of the homes in the historic district of Georgetown; the Federation of Genealogical Societies; and the Association for the Study of African American Life and History.

Walker has four adult children and resides in Washington, DC.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Barbara Dodson Walker was conducted by Sandra Ford Johnson on March 4, 2004, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Education administrator and historical researcher Barbara Dodson Walker (1930 - ) served the D.C. Public Schools as an elementary resource teacher, coordinator of the Title I program, and curriculum developer in reading and language arts. After retiring from the school system in 1983, she became involved in numerous projects designed to develop and maintain the records of African American history.

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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:

Walker, Barbara D.

Johnson, Sandra Ford (Interviewer)

Lane, Edgar Carey (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Walker, Barbara D.--Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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Public schools--Washington (D.C.)

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## Occupations:

Education Administrator

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Historical Researcher

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

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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 Barbara Dodson Walker, March 4, 2004. 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 Barbara Dodson Walker, Section A2004\_015\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:04 ?

Barbara Dodson Walker was born on January 18, 1930 in Washington, D.C. Her mother, Naomi Neal Dodson, was born in Northeast D.C. and went by the name Althea. Althea Neal Dodson's father was a lawyer and she was teacher who began her career in the South, but after being sexually harassed by a principal, came back to teach in Alexandria, Virginia and D.C. She met Walker's father, Joseph Dodson, while they were both students in D.C., he was at Howard University and she was across the street at Miner Normal School. Dodson was born in the Georgetown neighborhood of D.C., where his family had lived since before 1832. He was a respected physician who worked in the schools and had a practice in Georgetown. During Walker's childhood, Washington, D.C. had segregated recreation facilities and a segregated school system in which the teachers at African American schools were well-educated and there were specialized vocational high schools.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Dodson Walker, Section A2004\_015\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:05 ?

Barbara Dodson Walker's husband found her paternal great-grandmother's manumission paper. Walker's paternal grandmother was a washer woman, whose earnings sent Walker's father through medical school. Through doing genealogical research using state records and family records, Walker has traced her maternal family to North Carolina. Her maternal great-grandmother was the daughter of a slave owner who was of German-Jewish descent and she taught young women skills to be a house servant, first in the YWCA and later in her own home. Her son, Joseph Neal, Walker's grandfather, eventually moved to Washington, D.C. Walker was raised in the Georgetown neighborhood of D.C., in an African American community which she describes as being a "big family." Walker explains that the Mormon Church has compiled a collection of family records which are useful in genealogical research and explains how African Americans can verify their Native American ancestry. She also talks about the history of slavery and indentured servitude.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Dodson Walker, Section A2004\_015\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:18 ?

Barbara Dodson Walker remembers the unpleasant smell of the nearby horse rendering factory, walking through the mist of the ice cream factory and buying pies as a child in the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington, D.C. Her family attended Epiphany Roman Catholic Church. She attended several segregated elementary schools, which were usually named after African Americans or

abolitionists, starting at Wormley School, then moving to Phillips School, before her father sent her to St. Augustine Catholic School in D.C. Walker remembers her teachers, some of whom later became her colleagues, and her extracurricular activities, like playing tennis and listening to the radio. Walker always knew she would be a teacher; after high school she attended Miner Teachers College. She taught in several D.C. elementary schools during the 1950s, during which time she observed the limited impact of the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954) decision on desegregating D.C.'s public schools.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Dodson Walker, Section A2004\_015\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:57 ?

Barbara Dodson Walker became interested in genealogy through her late husband, James Dent Walker, who worked at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C. In 1977, her husband founded the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society (AAHGS) which helps African Americans trace their family history. She was president of the AAHGS from 1992 to 2002. Walker talks about the interdependent relationship between history and genealogy and the major contributions African Americans have made to history. She encourages everyone to collect and record their family history while they can. Walker talks about the organizations she's a member of, like the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), and stresses the importance of education for the African American community. She remembers the lessons her parents taught her and reflects upon her teaching career and her legacy. She describes her children, her hopes for the future and how she would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Barbara Dodson Walker, Section A2004\_015\_001\_005, TRT: 0:20:20 ?

Barbara Dodson Walker narrates her photographs.