

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Sarah-Ann Shaw

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Shaw, Sarah-Ann
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Sarah-Ann Shaw,
Dates:	February 13, 2007 and September 10, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:22:21).
Abstract:	Civil rights activist and television reporter Sarah-Ann Shaw (-) was the first African American television reporter in Boston. Shaw was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 13, 2007 and September 10, 2007, in Boston, Massachusetts and Roxbury, Massachusetts. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_067
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Boston's first African American television reporter, Sarah-Ann Shaw was born, Sarah-Ann King, in Boston, Massachusetts, to Annie Bell Bomar King and Norris King, Jr. Growing up in Roxbury, Shaw's father, who was active in the Roxbury Democratic Club, took her to lectures at Jordan Hall, the Ford Hall Forum, and Tremont Temple; there, young Shaw met Paul Robeson. Shaw's mother worked along side the selfless Melnea Cass. Shaw attended William P. Boardman Elementary School and Henry Lee Higginson Elementary School, was a Girl Scout, and was active at St. Mark's Social Center. A student at Girls Latin School, Shaw was involved with the NAACP Youth Movement; graduating in 1952, Shaw enrolled at Boston University, but left school in 1955 to get married.

Increasingly involved in community activities, Shaw worked with St. Mark's Social Center and as a member of the Boston Action Group (BAG). Shaw joined other activists like Otto P. and Muriel S. Snowden in 1957; national Student Movement head, Bill Strickland then asked her to head the Boston Northern Student Movement where she coordinated student led voter education, high school tutoring, and economic housing education with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), BAG, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Unitarians. In 1968, Shaw became involved with Ray Richardson's *Say Brother* public affairs show on WBEZ-TV; she would go on to appear on the program more than twenty times. In 1969, Shaw was hired by WBZ-TV 4 as Boston's first African American reporter; she remained a news reporter at WBZ TV 4 for more than thirty years. As a civil rights organizer and human services advocate, Shaw demonstrated a rare ability to unite Boston residents and tackle big picture issues. At WBZ, Shaw anchored another black oriented public affairs program, *Mzizi Roots*.

Shaw, who helped define minority affairs programming and news content, received numerous journalistic awards for her work, including an award from the Boston Radio-Television News Directors Association, the Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Association of Black Journalists in 1998, and the Yankee Quill Award from the New England Society of Newspaper Editors. Shaw also volunteered for Boston Partners in Education; served as a board member of Boston Neighborhood Network; and served as the President for both the Boston

Coalition of Black Women, and the League of Women for Community Service.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Sarah-Ann Shaw was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 13, 2007 and September 10, 2007, in Boston, Massachusetts and Roxbury, Massachusetts, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civil rights activist and television reporter Sarah-Ann Shaw (-) was the first African American television reporter in Boston.

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:

Shaw, Sarah-Ann

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Shaw, Sarah-Ann--Interviews

African American television journalists--Interviews

Television news anchors--Massachusetts--Boston--Interviews

Women television journalists--Massachusetts--Boston--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Television News Reporter

HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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 Sarah-Ann Shaw, February 13, 2007 and September 10, 2007. 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 Sarah-Ann Shaw, Section A2007_067_001_001, TRT: 0:30:25 ?

Sarah-Ann Shaw was born in Boston, Massachusetts to Annie Bomar King and Norris King, Jr. Her mother was born in Inman, South Carolina to Sarah Henderson Bomar and Benjamin Bomar, who had African American, white and Native American ancestry. As a young adult, she moved to Atlanta, Georgia in search of better employment. Shaw's father was born in Clayton, Alabama. After the death of his mother, Anna King, he moved to Atlanta, where his father, Norris King, Sr., remarried Lula King. Shaw's father studied to be an automobile mechanic at Morehouse College. Shortly after marrying, Shaw's parents moved to the South End of Boston, Massachusetts, where her father worked as a mechanic, and joined the Roxbury Democratic Club. He repaired military vehicles in Rock Island, Illinois during World War II, and later worked as a mechanic for the post office. Shaw also recalls visiting her maternal aunt and uncle's farm in Inman, South Carolina.

African American television journalists--Interviews.

Television news anchors--Massachusetts--Boston--Interviews.

Women television journalists--Massachusetts--Boston--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Sarah-Ann Shaw, Section A2007_067_001_002, TRT: 0:29:50 ?

Sarah-Ann Shaw was raised in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston, Massachusetts, where her family subscribed to the Pittsburgh Courier and the Baltimore Afro-American newspapers. She accompanied her father, Norris King, Jr., and brother, Norris B. King, to community meetings at the Ford Hall Forum and Old Masonic Temple, and once attended a lecture by entertainer and activist Paul Robeson. At fourteen years old, she joined the NAACP Youth Council, and picketed the F.W. Woolworth Company in protest of their discriminatory hiring practices. Shaw was also a Girl Scout, and belonged to the Young People's Fellowship and the League of Women for Community Service, which was founded by civic leader Maria Louise Baldwin and journalist Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin. Shaw began her education at the Boardman Elementary School and Henry L. Higginson Elementary School; and, from the seventh grade, attended the Girls' Latin School, where she was influenced by English teacher Zabelle Tahmizian.

Video Oral History Interview with Sarah-Ann Shaw, Section A2007_067_001_003, TRT: 0:29:29 ?

Sarah-Ann Shaw grew up in Boston, Massachusetts, where she attended dances at the Ritz Plaza and Revere Beach. On the radio, she listened to programs like 'The Shadow' and 'The Green Hornet,' and the music of The Orioles, The Ravens, Ruth Brown, Duke Ellington and Illinois Jacquet. She also attended Camp Atwater in North Brookfield, Massachusetts as a teenager. Upon graduating from the Girls' Latin School in 1952, Shaw studied sociology at Boston University until 1955. Then, she married and had a child, and joined activist Noel Day at the Boston Action Group. Together, they demonstrated against urban renewal, school segregation and the Wonder Bread company, which refused to hire black drivers. Shaw talks about the Freedom House, which was founded by Muriel Sutherland Snowden and Otto P. Snowden to house families displaced by urban renewal in Boston. Then, the Northern Student Movement's executive director, William Strickland, selected Shaw to direct the organization's branch in Boston.

Video Oral History Interview with Sarah-Ann Shaw, Section A2007_067_001_004, TRT: 0:30:21 ?

Sarah-Ann Shaw was the director of the Northern Student Movement's branch in Boston, Massachusetts, where she collaborated with state representative Byron Rushing and former city councilman Charles "Chuck" Turner. Shaw also worked with Ellen Swepson Jackson and Elizabeth Johnson, who went on to found Operation Exodus. As director, Shaw recruited volunteers from Boston's colleges, developed tutoring programs and organized voter registration. She frequently met with Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the NAACP to address issues in the community. During the late 1960s, Shaw became the host of the 'Say Brother' television program on WGBH-TV. Under the direction of Stan Lathan, she interviewed African American activists like Reverend Jesse L. Jackson and singer Odetta Gordon. In 1969, Shaw left WGBH-TV to become a reporter at Boston's WBZ-TV, where she later hosted 'Mzizi Roots.' She also remembers her mentor, Melnea Cass; and the producer of 'Say Brother,' Ray Richardson.

Video Oral History Interview with Sarah-Ann Shaw, Section A2007_067_002_005, TRT: 0:29:07 ?

Sarah-Ann Shaw was the first black woman to become a reporter at WBZ-TV in Boston, Massachusetts in 1969. She covered the court ordered desegregation of the Boston Public Schools, and was assigned to the predominately white Hyde Park neighborhood. Although Shaw tried to cover positive stories and provide unbiased reporting on the black community, she faced continuous criticism from the studio and viewers. In the 1980s, she covered Melvin King's mayoral campaign, as well as the case of Charles Stuart, who falsely claimed a black man killed his wife and unborn child in 1989. The accusation deepened the tension between the Boston Police Department and the black community, and led to the formation of a civilian review board. Shaw remembers the lack of diversity in Boston's city council and the U.S. Congress, despite the election of some black officials, like U.S. senators Edward Brooke and Carol Moseley Braun. Shaw retired from WBZ-TV in 2000, after thirty-one years as a news reporter.

Video Oral History Interview with Sarah-Ann Shaw, Section A2007_067_002_006, TRT: 0:29:45 ?

Sarah-Ann Shaw worked to provide unbiased news coverage in her role as the first African American female reporter for WBZ-TV in Boston, Massachusetts. In the early 1970s, she covered the desegregation of the Boston Public Schools in the South Boston and Hyde Park neighborhoods. During her career at WBZ-TV, Shaw often challenged the management to cover more positive news about the African American community. From 1971, Shaw hosted 'Mzizi Roots,' which aired on WBZ-TV for four years. The program covered topics like South African apartheid, and her guests included actor and activist Harry Belafonte, tap dancer Jimmy Slyde and singer Joe Williams. She remembers attorney Theodore C. Landsmark, who became the subject of the Pulitzer Prize winning photograph 'The Soiling of Old Glory,' while being attacked with an American flag on the Boston City Hall Plaza. During this time, Shaw mentored young African American reporters through the National Association of Black Journalists.

Video Oral History Interview with Sarah-Ann Shaw, Section A2007_067_002_007, TRT: 0:23:24 ?

Sarah-Ann Shaw served as the president of the Boston Association of Black Journalists, which was a predecessor to the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ). In the early 1970s, she attended NABJ's inaugural meeting at Texas Southern University in Houston, Texas. Her colleagues at the organization included Vernon Jarrett, Chuck Stone, Paul Brock and Francis Ward. Shaw also served as the president of the League of Women for Community Service, and the Boston Coalition of Black Women, Inc. Shaw retired from WBZ-TV in Boston, Massachusetts in 2000, and continued her

community service work with the Boston Public Library and Boston's city council. She talks about her family, as well as her hopes and concerns for the African American community. Shaw also reflects upon her life and legacy, and concludes the interview by describing how she would like to be remembered.