

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dorothy Cowser Yancy

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Yancy, Dorothy Cowser
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dorothy Cowser Yancy,
Dates:	June 20, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:38:30).
Abstract:	Political science professor and university president Dorothy Cowser Yancy (1944 -) was the first female president of Johnson C. Smith University. Yancy was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 20, 2007, in Charlotte, North Carolina. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_180
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Johnson C. Smith University President Dorothy Cowser Yancy was born on April 18, 1944 in Cherokee County, Alabama to Linnie Bell Covington Cowser and Howard Cowser, a farmer. She was raised on the family farm once owned by her great-great grandfather. Upon graduation from Hatcher High School in 1960, Yancy entered Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina where she was a student activist in the Civil Rights Movement, holding memberships in the SGA, SCLC, and SNCC. She graduated from Johnson C. Smith University in 1964 with her B.A. degree in history. In 1964, Yancy entered the University of Massachusetts where she earned her M.A. degree in history. Simultaneously, she received a certificate in management development from Harvard University. In 1968, Yancy married Robert James Yancy, and in 1974, she entered the doctoral program in political science at Atlanta University where she became an accomplished scholar.

After receiving her Ph.D. degree from Atlanta University, Yancy sought post-graduate work at a variety of institutions including the University of Singapore, Hampton University, Northeastern Illinois University, Northwestern University, Georgia Tech University and the University of Illinois, Chicago. Yancy became a tenure-track professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology in 1972 and served as professor of history, technology, and society and management. She became the first African American professor to be promoted and tenured as a full professor. She also served as Associate Director of the School of Social Sciences, and she remained at Georgia Tech until 1994, when she became the first female president of Johnson C. Smith University.

As president, Yancy doubled the University endowment to approximately \$57 million and increased applications 300%. She also upgraded the technical capabilities of the school by ensuring that each undergraduate student receives an IBM Thinkpad upon entry through a lease program. During her presidency, Yancy became the first female board president of the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association.

Yancy was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on June 20, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dorothy Cowser Yancy was conducted by Cheryl Butler on June 20, 2007, in Charlotte, North Carolina, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Political science professor and university president Dorothy Cowser Yancy (1944 -) was the first female president of Johnson C. Smith University.

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:

Yancy, Dorothy Cowser

Butler, Cheryl (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Yancy, Dorothy Cowser--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Georgia Institute of Technology

Johnson C. Smith University.

Occupations:

Political Science Professor

University President

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 Dorothy Cowser Yancy, June 20, 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 Dorothy Cowser Yancy, Section A2007_180_001_001, TRT: 0:29:04 ?

Dorothy Cowser Yancy was born on April 18, 1944 in Cherokee County, Alabama to Linnie Covington Cowser and Howard Cowser. Her maternal and paternal families lived for several generations in Ballplay, a small community of farmers in Cherokee County. Yancy's paternal great-great-grandfather, Paris Adams, was the son of a plantation owner, and received 160 acres of farmland through the Homestead Act of 1862. He bequeathed that land to Yancy's paternal great-grandparents, Alabama Adams Glover and Lewis Glover; and the farm remained in the family at the time of the interview. Yancy's maternal grandparents, Zonnie Covington and Shaley Covington, were also farmers in Cherokee County. Yancy was raised on her paternal family's farm, after it was passed down to her father. She began her education at the all-black Savage Wood Elementary School in Cherokee County; and, after one year, transferred to Hatcher High School in Centre, Alabama, which she attended from the first grade to graduation.

Video Oral History Interview with Dorothy Cowser Yancy, Section A2007_180_001_002, TRT: 0:28:21 ?

Dorothy Cowser Yancy grew up in a small community in Cherokee County, located in northern Alabama. Although the county was segregated, Yancy's family was held in high esteem, and many of her relatives were able to pass as white. At twelve years old, Yancy was accosted by a white pharmacist, but rebuffed his advances by mentioning her family's name. Yancy's father was a farmer and laborer at the Republic Steel Company, and her mother worked as a domestic. Neither were formally educated, but they ensured that all their children enrolled in college. Yancy attended the all-black Hatcher High School in Centre, Alabama; and was influenced by her home economics teacher, who taught her etiquette and time management. On one occasion, Yancy led a group of her friends to the nearest white high school, where they requested a tour; and was later punished by her principal, who perceived the trip as a protest for integration. After graduation, Yancy matriculated to Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Video Oral History Interview with Dorothy Cowser Yancy, Section A2007_180_001_003, TRT: 0:28:50 ?

Dorothy Cowser Yancy attended Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina. While in school, she participated in sit-ins and other demonstrations organized by civil rights leader Reginald Hawkins. The faculty of Johnson C. Smith University were also active in the Civil Rights Movement, including Yancy's English professor, who was the mother of SNCC activist Charles Jones. Yancy was involved in several organizations on campus, including the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, the international society and the Alpha Kappa Mu Honor Society. After graduating with a degree in history, Yancy spent the summer at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she faced discrimination from her professors and peers. She then matriculated to the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where she obtained a master's degree in history. After graduation, Yancy became an adjunct professor at Albany State College in Albany, Georgia, where she was mentored by her officemate, Professor Troas Lewis Latimer.

Video Oral History Interview with Dorothy Cowser Yancy, Section A2007_180_001_004, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

Dorothy Cowser Yancy and her husband, Robert Yancy, married in 1967. They had one daughter, Yvonne Cowser Yancy, who was born while Yancy was teaching at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia. Yancy was the university's first tenured African American professor, and served as the

associate director of the school of social sciences in addition to teaching courses on political science and labor relations. In 1978, Yancy completed a Ph.D. degree in political science with a focus in African American history at Atlanta University. Her doctoral research focused on the relationship between labor unions and Atlanta's mayoral office during the tenures of Sam Massell, Maynard Jackson and Ivan Allen, Jr.; and led to her union work with the United Auto Workers and the Communications Workers of America. In 1992, Yancy divorced her husband, and decided to apply for the presidency of her alma mater, Johnson C. Smith University.

Video Oral History Interview with Dorothy Cowser Yancy, Section A2007_180_001_005, TRT: 0:28:57 ?

Dorothy Cowser Yancy was elected to serve as the interim president of her alma mater, Johnson C. Smith University, in January of 1994; and assumed the role in October of that year. She was the university's first female president; and, throughout her tenure, was mentored by former historically black college presidents like Hugh Morris Gloster and Johnnetta B. Cole. Yancy goals included increasing the school's fundraising capacity and updating the technology on campus. Working on a capital campaign alongside banker Ed Crutchfield and utility executive John B. Stedman, Jr., Yancy increased the school's endowment from \$13 million to \$63.8 million by 1998. She also launched an initiative that led to the development of an informational technology department, and collaborated with IBM to provide a personal laptop computer to every student at the university. As the president of her alma mater, Yancy was able to reconnect with her former professors, for whom she hosted an annual lunch.

Video Oral History Interview with Dorothy Cowser Yancy, Section A2007_180_001_006, TRT: 0:14:38 ?

Dorothy Cowser Yancy served as the president of Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina. The school was founded in 1867 as Biddle University, but was renamed for businessman Johnson C. Smith after his widow, Jane Berry Smith, made several large donations to the university in his memory. During Yancy's tenure as president of Johnson C. Smith University, she also presided over the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association, and the group of university presidents associated with the United Negro College Fund. Yancy retired from Johnson C. Smith University in 2008. She often returned to her childhood home in Cherokee County, Alabama, where she visited the family cemetery at the New Bethel United Methodist Church, and the lands she inherited with her brother, Howard Dale Cowser. Yancy concludes the interview by reflecting upon her life and legacy.