

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Beverly Guy-Sheftall

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Guy-Sheftall, Beverly
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Beverly Guy-Sheftall,
Dates:	September 11, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:57:20).
Abstract:	Academic administrator and black women's studies professor Beverly Guy-Sheftall (1946 -) was a feminist scholar who founded the Spelman College Women's Research and Resource Center, and co-founded SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women. Guy-Sheftall was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 11, 2007, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_255
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Academic administrator and black women's studies professor Beverly Guy-Sheftall was born on June 1, 1946 in Memphis, Tennessee to Walter and Ernestine Varnado-Guy. Reared by her mother, who supported her three daughters by teaching math and later, working as an accountant, Guy-Sheftall was taught to work hard on her studies and to prepare for an independent, productive adulthood. Guy-Sheftall graduated with honors from Manassas High School in 1962, at the age of sixteen. That same year, she entered Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. There, Guy-Sheftall majored in English and minored in secondary education. After earning her B.A. degree in 1966, she moved on to Wellesley College for further study. Guy-Sheftall completed her M.A. degree requirements at Atlanta University in 1970.

In 1971, Guy-Sheftall returned to Spelman College as an English professor. She decided to help broaden the Women's Studies Movement to include issues pertinent to African Americans. Guy-Sheftall began editing books of literature by African American women and publishing articles about black feminism. Her doctoral dissertation was titled "Daughters of Sorrow: Attitudes toward Black Women, 1880-1920". Rarely are dissertations published in quantity, but Guy-Sheftall's was, appearing in 1991 as a volume in the series *Black Women in United States History*. She received her Ph.D. in 1977 from Emory University. Two years later, Guy-Sheftall co-edited *Sturdy Black Bridges: Visions of Black Women in Literature*, the first anthology of African American women's writings.

In the early 1980s, Guy-Sheftall helped to establish two seminal resources for Black Women's Studies. The first was Spelman College's Women's Research and Resource Center which she founded and served as the director for over two decades. The second was the periodical *SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women*, which Guy-Sheftall co-founded with Patricia Bell-Scott. Her other books include *Double Stitch: Black Women Write about Mothers & Daughters*, which she co-edited with Bell-Scott; *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought* and *Gender Talk*, which she co-authored with former Spelman College president Johnnetta

B.Cole.

As a testament to her intellectual prowess, Guy-Sheftall was awarded Spelman's Presidential Faculty Award for Outstanding Scholarship. She was also named to the Anna Julia Cooper Professorship, an endowed chair in the English Department that honors the daughter of a slave who earned a doctorate degree from the Sorbonne, in Paris. In addition to these accolades, Guy-Sheftall was a recipient of the Kellogg and Woodrow Wilson Fellowships.

Guy-Sheftall resides in Atlanta, Georgia.

Beverly Guy-Sheftall was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on September 11, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Beverly Guy-Sheftall was conducted by Denise Gines on September 11, 2007, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Academic administrator and black women's studies professor Beverly Guy-Sheftall (1946 -) was a feminist scholar who founded the Spelman College Women's Research and Resource Center, and co-founded SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women.

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:

Guy-Sheftall, Beverly

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Guy-Sheftall, Beverly--Interviews

African American educator--Interviews.

Guy-Sheftall, Beverly--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Spelman College. Women's Research and Resource Center.

Spelman College

Occupations:

Academic Administrator

Black Women's Studies Professor

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 Beverly Guy-Sheftall, September 11, 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 Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Section A2007_255_001_001, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

Beverly Guy-Sheftall was born on June 1, 1946 in Memphis, Tennessee to Ernestine Varnado Guy and Walter P. Guy, Jr. Her mother was born in 1919 in Canton, Mississippi to Etta Carmichael Varnado and Baptist minister, Willie L. Varnado. After moving with her family to Memphis, Guy-Sheftall's mother studied math at Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee. Guy-Sheftall's father was born in 1911 in Memphis, and was raised by his stepmother, Sadie Guy, and father, Walter P. Guy, Sr., who was a tailor and lumber yard owner. After attending Memphis' LeMoyne College, her father owned a sundry store, and worked on the railroad in Canada during the summers. Her mother taught math, and was later employed as an accountant by the state colleges of Tennessee. Guy-Sheftall had two sisters, Carmella Guy and Francine Guy. In Memphis, she began her education at the Lutheran Cooperative School, and went on to attend Manassas High School, where her father taught art, in addition to his other occupations.

Video Oral History Interview with Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Section A2007_255_001_002, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Beverly Guy-Sheftall attended Manassas High School in Memphis, Tennessee. Upon graduating in 1962, she matriculated at Spelman College, where she majored in English, and studied with professors Staughton Lynd, Howard Zinn and Vincent Harding. She also participated in Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.'s protests against Rich's Department Store. After graduation, Guy-Sheftall took additional English courses at Wellesley College, where she befriended Alvia Wardlaw, who became an art historian. She then earned a master's degree at Atlanta University. She began teaching at Alabama State University in Montgomery, where her maternal uncle, Levi Watkins, Sr. was the president; and returned to Spelman College in 1971 as an English and women's studies professor. In 1981, she became the director of the Women's Research and Resource Center, which housed the papers of black feminist authors Audre Lorde and Toni Cade Bambara, and produced the SAGE academic journal with editors Janet L. Sims-Wood and Miriam DeCosta-Willis.

African American high school students--Tennessee--Memphis.

African Americans--Education (Secondary)--Tennessee--Memphis.

African Americans--Education (Higher)--Georgia--Atlanta.

African American students--Social life and customs--United States.

Spelman College.

Zinn, Howard, 1922-2010.

Harding, Vincent.

Video Oral History Interview with Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Section A2007_255_001_003, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Beverly Guy-Sheftall earned a Ph.D. degree in American studies, and published her dissertation, 'Daughters of Sorrow: Attitudes Toward Black Women, from 1880-1920.' In 1991, she served as the editor of the black feminist anthology, 'Words of Fire,' which was published by the South End Press. With Rudolph P. Byrd, she edited 'Traps: African American Men on Gender and Sexuality.' She also contributed to the 'Double Stitch' anthology, and wrote 'Gender Talk' with Spelman College President Johnnetta B. Cole. Guy-Sheftall taught at Spelman College for thirty-six years; and, as the director of the Women's Research and Resource Center, conducted workshops on global black feminism. She was involved with the National Council for Research on Women, the Black Women's Health Imperative and the Future of Minority Studies project at Cornell University. She talks about Spelman College's Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance, and their protests against the misogyny of radio host Don Imus and rapper Nelly.

African Americans--Intellectual life--United States.

Spelman College.

Byrd, Rudolph P.

Cole, Johnnetta B.

African American women--Feminism.

Nelly (Rapper).

Imus, Don.

Rutgers Scarlet Knight (Basketball team)

Misogyny--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Section A2007_255_001_004, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Beverly Guy-Sheftall began collecting international dolls in 1973, and added to her collection during her travels to India, China and Africa. She also collected African American dolls from the National Black Arts Festival in Atlanta, Georgia. Inspired by Alice Walker's book, 'In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens,' she began to collect international quilts, and came to admire the work of Penny Sisto, a Scottish quilter who spent time among the Maasai in Kenya. In the 1980s, Guy-Sheftall studied women on Native American reservations in New Mexico through a fellowship from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. She also served for thirteen years as an editor of SAGE, the journal of the Women's Research and Resource Center at Spelman College in Atlanta. At the time of the interview, Guy-Sheftall planned to secure a million dollar endowment for the center. She reflects upon her life and legacy, her concerns for the African American community and her message to future generations.

African Americans--International travel.

Women collectors--United States.

Spelman College. Women's Research and Resource Center.