

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Marlene Randall

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Randall, Marlene, 1934-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Marlene Randall,
Dates:	May 13, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:57:25).
Abstract:	City government administrator Marlene Randall (1934 - 2021) served as an elementary school principal and city council member in the community of Portsmouth, Virginia. Randall was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 13, 2010, in Portsmouth, Virginia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_018
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

City councilwoman and longtime former educator, Marlene Randall was born on October 18, 1934 in Portsmouth, Virginia to Gladys and James West. After graduating from high school, Randall earned her B.S. degree in elementary education from Virginia State University. She also received her M.A. degree in early childhood education from Columbia University in 1960. Randall continued her education to receive her advanced certificate in administration from the University of Virginia and her advanced certificate in administration and supervision from Old Dominion University. In addition, Randall received her certificate in advanced studies from Nova University.

Randall began her teaching career in the Portsmouth Public School System. She went on to become treasurer for the Church and Community in Action, working to improve the quality of life of citizens in Portsmouth. She also worked as Secretary for Area II of the NAACP which includes Portsmouth, Norfolk, Chesapeake, and Suffolk, Virginia. She also created the pattern for the pairing of schools, staff and students that led to the integration of Portsmouth Public Schools. In 2002, Randall was elected to the Portsmouth City Council where she served three consecutive terms.

In 2008, Randall was a guest speaker at Tidewater Community College's Black History Month Celebration. She has also been recognized by the National League of Cities for attaining the Platinum level in its Certificate of Achievement in Leadership program. This is the highest level of achievement that one can attain in the state. She has also been the chairman of Virginia First Cities, and appointed by former Governor Tim Cane to the Criminal Justice Services Board.

Randall is married to Vernon Randall and together they have three children, Ricardo, Veronica, and Michelle. Unfortunately, her home was destroyed by fire on December 27, 2010.

Marlene Randall was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 13, 2010.

Randall passed away on April 1, 2021.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Marlene Randall was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 13, 2010, in Portsmouth, Virginia, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. City government administrator Marlene Randall (1934 - 2021) served as an elementary school principal and city council member in the community of Portsmouth, Virginia.

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:

Randall, Marlene, 1934-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Randall, Marlene, 1934- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Portsmouth City Council

Occupations:

City Government Administrator

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Marlene Randall, May 13, 2010. 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 Marlene Randall, Section A2010_018_001_001, TRT: 0:28:27 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Marlene Randall, Section A2010_018_001_002, TRT: 0:29:57 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Marlene Randall, Section A2010_018_001_003, TRT: 0:29:34 ?

Marlene Randall earned a master's degree at Columbia University's Teachers College, where she was mentored by Dr. Dolores Durkin. In addition to her coursework, Randall tutored struggling elementary school students in New York City's Harlem neighborhood. During this time, she became interested in childhood development, and wrote her thesis on toddlers. At this point in the interview, she talks about the importance of nurturing children's curiosity, recalls her own experiences as a child, when she often approached her grandparents with questions. Randall went on to become instrumental in the school integration process in Portsmouth, Virginia. There, her first role as an educator was as an assistant principal at Highland-Biltmore Elementary School. While serving in this position, she experienced frequent racial discrimination, and was not permitted to have a desk in the administration office. Influenced by her religious faith, Randall persisted, and eventually became the school's principal.

Video Oral History Interview with Marlene Randall, Section A2010_018_001_004, TRT: 0:30:12 ?

Marlene Randall graduated in 1955 from Virginia State College in Petersburg, Virginia. Three years later, she married Vernon Randall; and, in 1963, she received a master's degree in early childhood education from the Teachers College of Columbia University in New York City. As part of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare's school desegregation program, Randall was assigned to serve as the assistant principal of Highland-Biltmore Elementary School in her hometown of Portsmouth, Virginia. As the school's first African American administrator, she was frequently ignored, and was forced to work in the nurse's office with cardboard around her desk so she would not be seen. During this time, she received encouragement from Rufae Holmes, who supervised the desegregation program in Portsmouth. Randall went on to coordinate the redistricting and consolidation of the Portsmouth Public Schools, and served as the principal of Portsmouth's Lakeview Elementary School from the early 1990s.

Video Oral History Interview with Marlene Randall, Section A2010_018_001_005, TRT: 0:29:35 ?

Marlene Randall became the first African American administrator of Highland-Biltmore Elementary School in Portsmouth, Virginia in 1972, as part of a federal school desegregation program. When the principal's health failed four months later, she became the acting principal. Around 1983, Randall was assigned to Portsmouth's Lakeview Elementary School by superintendent Richard D. Trumble. During her tenure as principal, the school's students received the highest test scores in the district. In 1992, Randall was hired to redistrict Portsmouth's high schools, and closed Cradock High School and Woodrow Wilson High School. In retaliation, a group of teenagers shot at her home. That year, Randall suffered two stress-related heart attacks, and underwent open heart surgery. She went on to serve as the secretary of the Area II NAACP; and, in 2002, was elected to the Portsmouth City Council. She describes the encouragement of Councilman Bernard Griffin; and her concerns for youth, including drug abuse and incarceration.

Video Oral History Interview with Marlene Randall, Section A2010_018_001_006, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Marlene Randall was elected to the Portsmouth City Council in 2002. As a councilwoman, her concerns included mass incarceration, crime, education and the economic redevelopment of Portsmouth, Virginia. She describes the need to compete with the nearby towns of Norfolk, Virginia; Chesapeake, Virginia; and Suffolk, Virginia; and talks about the redevelopment plans for Port Centre and the Tidewater Community College. In addition, Randall talks about her family members, several of whom pursued careers in education, including her son,

Ricardo Randall; and her daughter, Veronica Randall Williams. Randall reflects upon her legacy and her hopes for the community of Portsmouth, and concludes the interview by describing how she would like to be remembered.