

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Roselyn Williams

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Williams, Roselyn E. (Roselyn Elaine)
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Roselyn Williams,
Dates:	June 2, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:44:58).
Abstract:	Mathematician Roselyn Williams (1950 -), former treasurer/secretary for the National Association of Mathematicians (NAM), is a professor and former chair of the mathematics department at Florida A & M University where she coordinated numerous programs to promote STEM education, such as Enhancing Diversity in Graduate Education for Women (EDGE for Women). Williams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 2, 2013, in Tallahassee, Florida. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_172
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Mathematician Roselyn Elaine Williams was born on November 1, 1950 in Tallahassee, Florida. Her father, Robert Williams, was a World War II veteran; her mother, Lucile Wynn, an educator. Born in the Florida A & M University (FAMU) Hospital, Williams grew up in academia and attended the nursery, elementary, and high schools on FAMU's campus. Williams then enrolled in Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia where she was mentored by Dr. Etta Falconer, chair of the mathematics department, and Dr. David Blackwell during a summer program at the University of California, Berkeley. She graduated from Spelman College with her B.S. degree in mathematics in 1972. Williams went on to earn her M.S. degree in mathematics from the University of Florida in 1974, and her Ph.D. degree in mathematics from Florida State University in 1988.

In 1974, Williams began her career in higher education as an instructor at Florida A & M University. She taught there for five years and then spent two semesters at Randolph-Macon Woman's College in Lynchburg, Virginia as an assistant professor of mathematics. After receiving her doctoral degree in 1988, Williams returned to Florida A & M University and was appointed as an associate professor in the mathematics department. In 2007, she was named chairperson of the mathematics department where she served until 2005. From 1990 through 2009, she served on the steering committee of the Sunshine State Scholars, a state-funded project that recognize outstanding high school students in mathematics and science. At Florida A & M University, she served on several campus committees to enhance undergraduate research and assess the performance of students in STEM disciplines.

Williams has coordinated programs to promote STEM education for students at all levels of education, including Alliance for Production of African American PhDs in the Mathematical Sciences (Alliance 1 + Alliance 2), the Florida A & M University Interdisciplinary Research Experience for Undergraduates (FAMU-IREU), the Florida A & M University Computer Science, Engineering Technology and Scholarship Program (CSEM Scholars),

Research Experiences for Undergraduate Faculty (REUF), and Enhancing Diversity in Graduate Education for Women (EDGE for Women).

Williams served as the treasurer/secretary for the National Association of Mathematicians (NAM), the Mathematical Association of America (MAA), and American Mathematical Society (AMS). She also served on the advisory board of the B. L. Perry Branch of the Leon County Public Library. Williams is a member of the board of the C. K. Steele Scholarship Foundation, Inc., the Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, and Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. In 2008, Williams' engagement for gender equality at the workplace was recognized by a presentation at the "Workshop on Inequality, Growth and Development" at the United Nations Summit in New York City.

Roselyn Williams was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on June 2, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Roselyn Williams was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 2, 2013, in Tallahassee, Florida, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Mathematician Roselyn Williams (1950 -), former treasurer/secretary for the National Association of Mathematicians (NAM), is a professor and former chair of the mathematics department at Florida A & M University where she coordinated numerous programs to promote STEM education, such as Enhancing Diversity in Graduate Education for Women (EDGE for 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:

Williams, Roselyn E. (Roselyn Elaine)

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Williams, Roselyn E. (Roselyn Elaine)--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Mathematician

HistoryMakers® Category:

ScienceMakers

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 Roselyn Williams, June 2, 2013. 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 Roselyn Williams, Section A2013_172_001_001, TRT: 1:28:19
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Roselyn Williams describes her family background. Her mother, Minnie Lucile Wynn Williams was born in 1918, in Apalachicola, Florida. She attended school in Apalachicola, Quincy, and Tallahassee, Florida, before enrolling in Florida A&M University (FAMU), where she majored in French and mathematics. Williams describes her mother's career as a teacher, principal, and curriculum developer in the Leon County school system. Williams' father, Robert Leslie Williams, was born in 1918 in Quincy. After graduating from high school in Tallahassee, he joined World War II, and was stationed overseas. Upon his return, he joined the staff at FAMU. Williams' parents met in school in Quincy, and married in 1945. She describes her parents' personalities, talks about her brother, Ronald Leslie Williams, and her earliest memories of growing up in Tallahassee. Williams also shares the history of The Rabbit's Foot Minstrel Company, and her paternal grandfather's career as a clarinetist in the group.

African American families--Florida.

Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University.

African American educators.

World War, 1939-1945--Participation, African American.

Childhood--Florida--1950-1960.

Video Oral History Interview with Roselyn Williams, Section A2013_172_001_002, TRT: 2:28:36
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Roselyn Williams was born and raised in Tallahassee, Florida where she and her family lived in close proximity to Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU). Williams describes her childhood neighborhood, her memories of growing up in Tallahassee, and her family trips in Florida. Williams' family attended Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, where the preacher, Reverend C.K. Steele, played a very important role in leading the Civil Rights Movement in Tallahassee, and in integrating Tallahassee in the late 1960s. Williams describes the thriving black community in Tallahassee in the 1950s, during segregation, and the changes that came with integration. She also talks about the schools in Tallahassee, and her own experience of attending school on FAMU's campus.

Childhood--Florida--1950-1960.

Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University.

African Americans--Religion.

Civil rights movements--Florida--20th century.

Integration--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Roselyn Williams, Section A2013_172_001_003, TRT: 3:28:58
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Roselyn Williams discovered her talent in mathematics in high school. She talks about her favorite teachers in school and from the age of five, her interest in playing the piano. Williams recalls frequent visits from notable guests while

growing up near Florida A&M University. She also recalls the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, who had been a frequent visitor at her church in Tallahassee. Williams graduated from high school in 1968, and attended Spelman College, where she majored in mathematics. She describes her rich experience at Spelman, and talks about the influence of her math professors, Dr. Shirley McBay and Dr. Etta Falconer, as well as her summer at the University of California, Berkeley, where she met mathematician, David Blackwell. In 1972, Williams went on to attend Florida State University, where she was the first African American student to pursue a master's degree in mathematics.

African Americans--Education--United States.

Mathematics--Study and teaching--United States.

King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968--Assassination.

Spelman College.

African American graduate students--Florida.

Video Oral History Interview with Roselyn Williams, Section A2013_172_001_004, TRT: 4:30:29
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In 1974, Roselyn Williams accepted a position as an instructor of mathematics at Florida A&M University (FAMU), where she taught for five years. Williams went on to pursue her Ph.D. degree in mathematics at Florida State University. She describes her dissertation, entitled 'Finite Dimensional Hopf algebras', under the direction of Professor Warren Nichols. She also discusses the influence of German mathematician, David Hilbert, and the practical applications of mathematical theories and techniques. In 1987, Williams joined Randolph-Macon Woman's College in Virginia, as an assistant professor of mathematics. In 1988, she returned to the mathematics faculty at FAMU. Williams describes her transition from research mathematics to being a teacher and mentor for undergraduate students. From 1996 to 1997, Williams directed the 'Mathematical Modeling in the Natural and Social Sciences' program that engaged junior high school students in scientific research.

Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University--Faculty

Mathematics--Study and teaching--United States.

African American educators.

Video Oral History Interview with Roselyn Williams, Section A2013_172_001_005, TRT: 5:28:43
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In 2001, Roselyn Williams co-founded the Alliance for the Production of African American Ph.D.s in the Mathematical Sciences (Alliance). She describes her work with the organization and her philosophy of teaching mathematics and making it more accessible. Williams also reflects upon her career, her hopes for Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), and the African American community. In 2011, Williams served as the director of the 'Enhancing Diversity in Graduate Education for Women' (EDGE) program at FAMU. She talks about her involvement with the National Association of Mathematicians (NAM), prominent African American mathematicians, and her serving National Science Foundation (NSF) panels.

African American mathematicians.

Mathematics--Study and teaching.

Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University.

Women--Education (Higher)--United States.

National Science Foundation (U.S.).

Video Oral History Interview with Roselyn Williams, Section A2013_172_001_006, TRT: 6:19:53

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Roselyn Williams shares her concerns for the African American community, and her hopes for Florida A&M University (FAMU). She describes her close relationship with her students, and her collaborations with other departments at FAMU. In this final section of the interview, Williams also talks about how she would like to be remembered, and describes her photographs.

Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University.

Teacher-student relationships.

Photographs.