

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with A. Grace Lee Mims

PERSON

Mims, A. Grace Lee

Alternative Names: A. Grace Lee Mims;

Life Dates: July 17, 1930-October 4, 2019

Place of Birth: Snow Hill, Alabama, USA

Residence: East Cleveland, OH

Work: Cleveland, OH

Occupations: Radio Host; Vocalist

Biographical Note

Radio host and vocalist A. Grace Lee Mims was born on July 17, 1930 in Snow Hill, Alabama to musicians Arnold W. and Alberta Grace Edwards Lee. Mims graduated valedictorian from Snow Hill Institute, which was founded by her grandfather. She went on to attend and graduate from Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia, and later received her M.L.S degree from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio.

Upon graduation, Mims married Howard A. Mims. She was also hired as a librarian in Detroit, Michigan before moving to Cleveland, where she worked at several branches of the Cleveland Public Library. Mims was employed as head librarian at Glenville High School for ten years, where she coordinated the Black Arts Festival, established the most extensive collection of books on African American history and culture in the State of Ohio, and helped found the first Afrocentric lecture course in the Cleveland Public Schools. In 1976, she created and became hostess and producer of “The Black Arts” on WCLV-FM, Cleveland’s classical music radio station. From 1980 to 2010, Mims produced and hosted WCLV’s “Artslog,” a daily five-minute show of interviews. Also in 1980, she was hired as a voice teacher at the Cleveland Music School Settlement.

Mims has served as soprano soloist at Fairmount Presbyterian Church, as soloist with the William Appling singers, as well as throughout the Cleveland area. She was a member of The Cleveland Orchestra Chorus and Chamber Chorus under Robert Shaw, and performed with The New York Bass Violin Choir. In addition, Mims has recorded two albums: “Spirituals,” a solo record, and “A Spirit Speaks” with her family’s jazz-

folk ensemble, The Descendants of Mike and Phoebe.

Mims received numerous honors, including an honorary doctorate of music from Cleveland State University in 1999. In 2007, she was the honoree of the Greater Cleveland Chapter of The National Coalition of the 100 Black Women, Inc., and a recipient the Cleveland Arts Prize Martha Joseph Award in 2011. Mims also served on many arts-related boards, including the Cleveland Institute of Music, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Cleveland Orchestra's Community Project, the Cleveland Arts Prize Committee, the Western Reserve Historical Society's Black History Archives and The Rainey Institute. Mims and her husband ran the Cleveland Hampton Institute Alumni Scholarship program for over thirty years.

Mims passed away on October 4, 2019.

A. Grace Lee Mims was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on February 14, 2014.

Related Entries

Case Western Reserve University [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

MSLS

Hampton University [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

MS

Snow Hill Institute [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Diploma

Cleveland State University [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Honorary Doctorate

U.S. Government [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Asst. Librarian

Hampton University [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Asst. Librarian

Cleveland Public Library [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1950 to 1950]

Asst. Librarian

Detroit Public Library [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1953 to 1954]

Young Adult Librarian

Cleveland Orchestra Chorus [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1960 to 1960]

Vocalist

Glenville High School [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1963 to 1973]

Head Librarian

The Descendants of Mike and Phoebe [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1973 to 1983]

Vocalist

Cleveland Music School Settlement [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 198001 to ?]

Voice Instructor

WCLV-FM [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 197605 to ?]

Producer and Hostess

Hampton Alumni Association [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Scholarship Benefit Chair

Cleveland Institute of Music [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Trustee

Cleveland Museum of Art [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Honorary Trustee

Western Reserve History Museum [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Co-founder, African American Committee

Cleveland Arts Prize [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Member