

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Carol L. Adams

PERSON

**Adams, Carol L., 1944-**

**Alternative Names:** Carol L. Adams;

**Life Dates:** May 11, 1944-

**Place of Birth:** Louisville, Kentucky, USA

**Residence:** Chicago, IL

**Occupations:** Nonprofit Executive

## **Biographical Note**

Nonprofit executive Carol L. Adams was born on May 11, 1944, in Louisville, Kentucky to William and Lora Adams. She studied music at Lincoln University in Jefferson, Missouri, for a year before transferring to Fisk University where she graduated with a B.A. degree in sociology in 1965. The following year she earned her M.A. degree in sociology from Boston University. She pursued doctoral coursework at the University of Chicago, studying under esteemed sociologist Horace R. Cayton, before leaving to

complete her Ph.D. degree in sociology from the Union Graduate School in 1976. She has also studied at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and at Yale University.

In 1968, Adams began her career in academia as the research director for the Center for Inner City Studies (CICS) at Northeastern Illinois University. Over a ten-year period, she assumed greater responsibility as the CICS's assistant director and became a tenured associate professor. She developed a number of successful programs and key community partnerships for CICS during its early years. Adams went on to spend several years as the first director of research and planning for the Neighborhood Institute, a division of South Shore Bank (later the Shorebank Institute). In just two years, Adams managed to establish several programs designed to promote community development, revitalization and self-sufficiency.

In 1981, Adams returned to academia as the director for Loyola University's African-American studies program, a position she held until 1988. She then served as dean of adult and continuing education at Kennedy-King College in Chicago for a year. From 1989 to 1996, Adams worked for the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA). While at the CHA, Adams went from directing one department to managing thirteen departments and a \$500 million budget. Adams subsequently served as the director for the International House of Blues Foundation and the founding director of Chicago's Museums and Public Schools program before returning in 2000 to Northeastern University as Executive Director of CICS. Under her direction, the Center experienced a new surge of growth in student enrollment, technological advancement, and community programming and collaborations.

In January 2003, Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich named Adams secretary of the Department of Human Services, the state's largest government agency. During

her six year tenure, the agency secured almost \$250 million in new grant funding and dramatically reduced the infant mortality rate of infants born to Medicaid-eligible women. Since 2009, Adams has been the president and chief executive officer of the DuSable Museum of African American History. Adams has been the recipient of numerous research awards, grants and honors, including the prestigious Phi Beta Kappa key.

Carol Adams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on April 7, 2003 and August 24, 2010.

## Related Entries

**Albert E. Meyzeek Middle School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Louisville Central High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Fisk University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**B.A.**

**Boston University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**M.A.**

**Union Graduate School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Ph.D.**

**Yale University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Harvard University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**University of Chicago** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Neighborhood Institute** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 2008 to ?]

**Director of Research and Planning**

**Loyola University of Chicago** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1981 to 1988]

**Director of African American Studies Program**

**Kennedy-King College** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1987 to 1988]

**Dean of Adult and Continuing Education**

**Chicago Housing Authority** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1989 to 1996]

**Director of Resident Services and Programs**

**International House of Blues Foundation** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1997 to 1998]

**Director**

**Museums and Public Schools** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1998 to 2000]

**Founding Director**

**Northeastern Illinois University Center for Inner  
City Studies** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 2000 to 2003]

**Executive Director**

**Illinois. Department of Human Services.** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 2003 to 2009]

**Secretary**

**DuSable Museum of African American History**  
[EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 2009 to ?]

## **President and CEO**