

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Carol L. Adams

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## Overview of the Collection

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| <b>Repository:</b>           | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com  |
| <b>Creator:</b>              | Adams, Carol L., 1944-  |
| <b>Title:</b>                | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Carol L. Adams,  |
| <b>Dates:</b>                | April 7, 2003 and August 24, 2010   |
| <b>Bulk Dates:</b>           | 2003 and 2010   |
| <b>Physical Description:</b> | 9 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (4:11:38).  |
| <b>Abstract:</b>             | Nonprofit executive Carol L. Adams (1944 - ) was the secretary of the Illinois Department of Human Services and director of the Center for Inner City Studies at Northeastern Illinois University. She was also the president and chief executive officer of the DuSable Museum of African American History. Adams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 7, 2003 and August 24, 2010, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| <b>Identification:</b>       | A2003_066   |
| <b>Language:</b>             | The interview and records are in English.   |

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

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.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Carol L. Adams was conducted by Larry

Crowe on April 7, 2003 and August 24, 2010, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 9 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. Nonprofit executive Carol L. Adams (1944 - ) was the secretary of the Illinois Department of Human Services and director of the Center for Inner City Studies at Northeastern Illinois University. She was also the president and chief executive officer of the DuSable Museum of African American History.

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## **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®.

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## **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.

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## **Controlled Access Terms**

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### **Persons:**

Adams, Carol L., 1944-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

## **Subjects:**

Adams, Carol L., 1944---Interviews  
African Americans--Interviews

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African American government executives--Illinois--Interviews.

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African American college administrators--Illinois--Interviews.

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African American museum directors--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

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## **Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## **Occupations:**

Nonprofit Executive

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

CivicMakers

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## **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 Carol L. Adams, April 7, 2003 and August 24, 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 2/5/2020 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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## **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.

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## **Detailed Description of the Collection**

### **Series I: Original Interview Footage**

Video Oral History Interview with Carol L. Adams, Section  
A2003\_066\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:00 2003/04/07

Carol L. Adams was born on May 11, 1944 in Louisville, Kentucky to William Clarence Adams and Laura Elizabeth Knox Adams. Her father was born in Louisville, Kentucky in 1905 after his father and three uncles migrated to Kentucky from Louisiana and married the four Williams sisters. Adams' paternal grandfather died when he was injured on the job and a white hospital refused to admit him. Adams's father, a "race man," attended the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee Alabama, but left to make money in the newspaper business to pay his brother's way

through school. Laura Elizabeth Knox was born on November 23, 1910 in Henderson, Kentucky and was a homemaker. Adams grew up in the Smoketown neighborhood of Louisville, Kentucky and was the youngest of her siblings. She attended Grace Hope Presbyterian Church, Booker T. Washington Elementary School, Jackson Junior High School, and Central High School, where her mentors included Lyman T. Johnson and her English teacher Mrs. Lauderdale.

African American families--Kentucky--Louisville.

Segregation--Kentucky--Louisville.

African Americans--Education (Secondary)--Kentucky--Louisville.

African Americans--Kentucky--Louisville--Social life and customs.

Video Oral History Interview with Carol L. Adams, Section A2003\_066\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:05 2003/04/07

Carol L. Adams graduated from Central High School in Louisville, Kentucky in 1961. She attended Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri from 1961 until 1962, and left because she disagreed with how the school treated civil rights protesters. She enrolled at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, where her teachers included Arna Bontemps, Robert Hayden, and Aaron Douglas and where she joined HistoryMaker Reverend C.T. Vivian in protesting Morrison's Cafeteria. She was arrested in 1963 and represented by the prominent black lawyer Z. Alexander Looby. Adams received her B.A. degree in sociology in 1965 and enrolled at Boston University in Massachusetts, where she received her M.A. degree in 1966. The racism of Boston resulted in Adams moving in September of 1966 to work at the Welfare Council of Metropolitan Chicago, Illinois. Through Charles Ross, Adams met Al Raby as well as HistoryMakers Warner Saunders, Abena Joan P. Brown, and others with whom she formed the organization the Catalyst in 1968.

Fisk University.

African Americans--Study and teaching (Higher).

African American universities and colleges.  
Civil rights movements--Kentucky--Louisville.  
Civil rights movements--Tennessee--Nashville.  
Civil rights demonstrations--Tennessee--Nashville.  
Mogey, John M.  
Douglas, Aaron.  
Hayden, Robert Earl.  
Masuoka, Jitsuichi, 1903-  
Boston University.

Video Oral History Interview with Carol L. Adams, Section  
A2003\_066\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:23 2003/04/07

Carol L. Adams was one of the founders of a group called the Catalyst in 1968 along with Don Linder, Dr. Anderson Thompson, Al Raby, and HistoryMakers Warner Saunders, Abena Joan P. Brown, Useni Eugene Perkins, Haki Madhubuti, Harold Pates, and others. Adams describes how she was mentored and inspired by Brown as a teacher. Adams enrolled at the University of Chicago to study sociology in 1968, where one of her classmates was HistoryMaker Dr. Gloria Jackson Bacon. She started to lose interest in her University studies after she started teaching at Crane Junior College and became involved with the Catalyst, the Communiversity, and the Jacob H. Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies at Northeastern Illinois University. However, she stayed with the University of Chicago as a research assistant to sociologist Horace R. Cayton until his death in 1970. Adams describes the key programs, partnerships, and organizations she developed during this period with prominent black artists and activists in Chicago.

Chicago (Ill.)--Social conditions.

University of Chicago.

Cayton, Horace R. (Horace Roscoe), 1903-1970.

African Americans--Study and teaching--Illinois--Chicago.

Chicago (Ill.)--Social life and customs.

Northeastern Illinois University. Center for Inner City Studies.

Video Oral History Interview with Carol L. Adams, Section  
A2003\_066\_001\_004, TRT: 0:20:50 2003/04/07

Carol L. Adams worked at the Jacob H. Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies from 1968 until 1978. In 1976, she received her Ph.D. degree in sociology from Union Graduate School. In 1978, Adams became Director of Research and Planning at the Neighborhood Institute of South Shore Bank, where she became known for writing and evaluating grant proposals and where she developed the South Shore Cultural District Plan. In 1981, Adams became director of the African American Studies program at Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois, where she taught undergraduates, started a Black Film Festival, and invited speakers like Chicago Mayor Harold Washington and HistoryMakers Nikki Giovanni, Maulana Karenga, Minister Louis Farrakhan, and Sam Greenlee to campus. Adams recalls traveling to Kemet with the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations in 1987 and working with groups like the eta Creative Arts Foundation, the AACM, the Chicago Arts Council, and the Coalition to Save the South Shore Country Club.

African American college teachers.

Community development--Illinois--Chicago.

African Americans--Study and teaching (Higher).

Video Oral History Interview with Carol L. Adams, Section  
A2003\_066\_002\_005, TRT: 0:31:22 2010/08/24

Carol L. Adams was director of African American Studies at Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois from 1981 until 1987, where she marketed the program to students and brought prominent speakers like Chicago Mayor Harold Washington to campus during his first campaign. Adams reflects on Washington's death and her involvement with his campaign as well as the campaigns of HistoryMakers Mayor Richard Hatcher and President Barack Obama. In 1987, Adams left Loyola University to be Dean of Adult and Continuing Education at Kennedy-King College under her friend and HistoryMaker Harold Pates. In 1989, she was approached by HistoryMaker Vincent Lane to become Director of Resident Services and Programs for the Chicago Housing Authority. Adams reflects on the history



of the Chicago Housing Authority, the problems Chicago's public housing faced both before and after her tenure, and the policies that have limited the CHA's ability to serve Chicago's communities in need.

African American college teachers.

African Americans--Education (Higher).

African Americans--Study and teaching.

Washington, Harold, 1922-1987.

Loyola University of Chicago.

Chicago Housing Authority.

Public housing--Illinois--Chicago.

Chicago (Ill.)--Social conditions.

Inner cities--Illinois--Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with Carol L. Adams, Section  
A2003\_066\_002\_006, TRT: 0:31:28 2010/08/24

Carol L. Adams describes her experience as Director of Resident Services and Programs for the Chicago Housing Authority from 1989 until 1996. She describes several programs during her tenure, including Resident-Owned Business Opportunities, the Midnight Basketball League, CADRE (Combatting Alcohol and Drugs through Rehabilitation and Education), Mama Said, Project Peace, and the Ida B. Wells Preparatory Elementary Academy. She reflects on the importance of moving her offices to Ida B. Wells Homes from downtown, and on the brutal murder of five-year-old Eric Morse at Ida B. Wells Homes. In 1996, Adams was invited by Isaac Tigrett to be director of the International House of Blues Foundation, where she headed the organization's philanthropic efforts until the company's board was reorganized and funding was cut. Adams left the House of Blues Foundation in 1998.

Chicago Housing Authority.

Public housing--Illinois--Chicago.

Inner cities--Illinois--Chicago.

Chicago (Ill.)--Social conditions.

House of Blues (Firm)--Endowments.

Video Oral History Interview with Carol L. Adams, Section  
A2003\_066\_002\_007, TRT: 0:31:11 2010/08/24

Carol L. Adams describes the Project Peace program at the Chicago Housing Authority and her career after the International House of Blues Foundation. In 1998, Adams became founding director of the Museum and Public Schools program. In 2000, Adams became director of the Jacob H. Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago, where she increased enrollment, incorporated new technologies into their classrooms, and strengthened the Center's engagement with the public housing community. In 2003, Adams was named Secretary of the Illinois Department of Human Services by Governor Rod Blagojevich, where she worked closely with Deputy Governor Louanner Peters and oversaw 17,000 employees. In her tenure as secretary, Adams integrated the separate departments within Human Services, secured grants, and established Team Illinois to revitalize poor communities across the state.

African American college administrators.

Illinois. Dept. of Human Services.

Northeastern Illinois University. Center for Inner City Studies.

African American government executives--Illinois.

Illinois--Officials and employees.

House of Blues (Firm)--Endowments.

Video Oral History Interview with Carol L. Adams, Section  
A2003\_066\_002\_008, TRT: 0:29:48 2010/08/24

Carol L. Adams was Secretary of the Illinois Department of Human Services from 2003 until 2009. As secretary, she established initiatives such as Team Illinois, which brought resources to low-income cities in Illinois such as Pembroke. Adams reflects on the challenges of working in State-wide politics, her candidacy for president of Chicago State University in Illinois, and her decision to leave the Department of Human Services to become director of the DuSable Museum of African American History in Chicago, Illinois. She describes the history of the museum, which was founded by HistoryMaker Dr. Margaret Burroughs and was named after Chicago's founder, Jean Baptiste Point du Sable. Adams describes the museum's facilities, including its location in Chicago's

Washington Park and their Round House building. Adams also describes the museum's efforts to increase community involvement in its expositions and the challenge of digitizing and storing their vast collections.

Illinois. Dept. of Human Services.

Illinois--Officials and employees.

African American government executives--Illinois.

DuSable Museum of African-American History.

African American museums--Illinois--Chicago.

African American museum directors.

Burroughs, Margaret Taylor, 1915-2010.

Video Oral History Interview with Carol L. Adams, Section  
A2003\_066\_002\_009, TRT: 0:20:31 2010/08/24

Carol L. Adams describes her experience as director of the DuSable Museum of African American History in Chicago, Illinois. She talks about the museum's impressive collection and the difficult process of archiving that collection to gain accreditation for the museum.

Adams describes her involvement with the video production and equipment company called the Paradise Group. She ends the interview by reflecting on her hopes and concerns for the African American community, her legacy, and her family. She also shares a story about her daughter, Nia Malika Augustine, who was featured in a Guaranty Bank ad in Muhammad Speaks and inspired the names of many girls born around the same year.

DuSable Museum of African-American History.

African American museum directors.

African American museums--Illinois--Chicago.

African American producers and directors.

Names, Personal.