

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Beverly Helm-Renfro

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Illinois Statecraft Oral History project

Interview # IS-A-L-2010-024

Beverly Helm-Renfro, daughter of Eddie 'Doc' Helm, and administrative assistant to state Senator Barack Obama from 2001 to 2004, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: June 15, 2010 Location: Abraham Lincoln Pres. Library, Springfield, IL

Date: July 13, 2010 Location: Abraham Lincoln Pres. Library, Springfield, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: Janet Frederick, ALPL Volunteer

Edited by: Kate Steigerwald and Rozanne Flatt, ALPL Volunteers

Total Pages: 87 pages Total Time: 2:13 + 2:07 / 2.22 + 2.12 = 4.34 hrs

Session 1: Growing up as the daughter of statehouse photographer 'Doc' Helm

Session 2: Years as the Legislative Assistant to state Senator Barack Obama

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on Feb 14, 2011.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois. **This is a redacted interview, including only one minor redaction in Session 1. The redaction will be removed on January 1, 2015 per the request of Beverly Helm-Renfro.**

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Abstract

Beverly Helm-Renfro, *Illinois Statecraft*, IS-A-L-2010-024

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Beverly Helm-Renfro was born on May 26th, 1946 in Berwyn, Illinois, and grew up in Springfield. Her father, Eddie Winfred 'Doc' Helm served as the chief photographer for the Illinois Secretary of State for decades, and in that capacity took photos of most of the leading politicians in Illinois as well as visiting dignitaries from the 1940s to the early 1990s. Beverly described what it was like growing up in Springfield in the 1950s and '60s as an African American, and her parents' activities and contributions to the greater community. She also discussed her early life and career as an administrative assistant to state Senator Fred Smith in 1973-78. She then moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, where she worked in a large group home for juvenile delinquents and also became a foster parent for juvenile delinquent boys. Upon returning to Springfield, she was the director of the Union Baptist Church Day Care Center, and then opened and operated her own day care home for many years.

In 2000 she began working for then State Senator Barack Obama as his administrative assistant, working out of his legislative office in the state capitol building. She discussed her experiences with Senator Obama at length, often assisting his constituents with various issues and concerns. She shared many personal memories of these years, including his momentous speech at the Democratic National Convention in 2004, his run for the U.S. Senate that year, and the whirlwind of activities and events that followed that speech.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Eddie Winfred 'Doc' Helm; James Helm (brother); IL State Senator Barack Obama; IL State Senator Fred Smith; Senator Emil Jones; Obama's 2004 speech to the Democratic Convention; Paul Powell; Gov. Jim Thompson; Gov Richard Ogilvie; Gov Jim Edgar; Gov Rod Blagojevich

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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