

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lloyd Richards

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Richards, Lloyd
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Lloyd Richards,
Dates:	September 11, 2001
Bulk Dates:	2001
Physical Description:	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:20:15).
Abstract:	Stage actor, academic administrator, and theater director Lloyd Richards (1919 - 2006) directed <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> , Broadway's first play by an African American woman. Richards later became director of the National Playwrights' Conference at the O'Neill Theater and the dean of the prestigious Yale School of Drama as well as artistic director of the Yale Repertory Theatre. Richards died on his birthday on Thursday, June 29, 2006. Richards was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 11, 2001, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2001_064
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Actor and director Lloyd Richards was born on June 29, 1919 in Toronto, Canada. His father, a Jamaican “Garveyite” master carpenter, moved the family to Detroit in search of a job at Henry Ford’s automobile plant. However, misfortune struck early when his father died unexpectedly and Richards and his older brother took odd jobs to keep the family afloat.

After high school, Richards enrolled in pre-law at Wayne State University, but he found that his real interest was in acting and radio programming. After fighting in World War II, he returned to Detroit and remained active in local theater and broadcasting. In fact, he became part of a local theater troupe and was hired on air as a radio announcer. In the 1950s, Richards moved to New York City hoping to make his mark. He supported himself by working several jobs, doing plays and television spots, and eventually worked as an acting coach. In the late 1950s, friend Sidney Poitier asked Richards to direct a play, *A Raisin in the Sun*, by a then-unknown black playwright, Lorraine Hansberry. It was Broadway’s first play by a black woman and he was its director.

Always committed to teaching, in the wake of *Raisin*, Richards began as a drama instructor at New York University School of the Arts and Hunter College. Later, he became director of the National Playwrights’ Conference at the O’Neill Theater and the dean of the prestigious Yale School of Drama and artistic director of the Yale Repertory Theatre. It was in these capacities that Richards influenced the careers of many playwrights and actors, including Athol Fugard, August Wilson and James Earl Jones. With Wilson he developed a lasting partnership as Richards went on to direct and produce the first seven of Wilson’s plays to reach Broadway. Richards won a Tony in 1986 for his direction of Wilson’s play, *Fences*.

Richards was a professor emeritus at the Yale School of Drama and served on several artistic and theatrical boards, including the National Endowment for the Arts. Richards received numerous awards, including several honorary degrees, and was inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame.

Richards died on his birthday on Thursday, June 29, 2006 at 87 years old.

Lloyd Richards was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on September 11, 2001.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Lloyd Richards was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on September 11, 2001, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Stage actor, academic administrator, and theater director Lloyd Richards (1919 - 2006) directed *A Raisin in the Sun*, Broadway's first play by an African American woman. Richards later became director of the National Playwrights' Conference at the O'Neill Theater and the dean of the prestigious Yale School of Drama as well as artistic director of the Yale Repertory Theatre. Richards died on his birthday on Thursday, June 29, 2006.

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:

Richards, Lloyd

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Richards, Lloyd--Interviews

African American theatrical producers and directors--Interviews

African American actors--Interviews

African American educators--Interviews

Yale University--Faculty--Interviews

Detroit (Mich.)--Social conditions

African Americans--Relations with Indians

Wayne State University

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

Off-Broadway theater

Mann, Paul, 1915-1985

Poitier, Sidney

Hansberry, Lorraine, 1930-1965

African Americans in the performing arts--United States

Yale School of Drama

Soyinka, Wole

Wilson, August

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Yale School of Drama.

Occupations:

Academic Administrator

Stage Actor

Theater Director

HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers

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 Lloyd Richards, September 11, 2001. 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 Lloyd Richards, Section A2001_064_001_001, TRT: 0:30:23 ? Actor and theatrical director Lloyd Richards begins by describing his family background and his childhood. He remembers his parents and describes his West Indian heritage. He recalls his early childhood in Toronto and then describes his family's move to Detroit. He describes his environs in Detroit and talks about his

family life.

African American theatrical producers and directors--Interviews.

African American actors--Interviews.

African American educators--Interviews.

Yale University--Faculty--Interviews.

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Wayne State University.

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

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Hansberry, Lorraine, 1930-1965.

African Americans in the performing arts--United States.

Yale School of Drama.

Soyinka, Wole.

Wilson, August.

- Video Oral History Interview with Lloyd Richards, Section A2001_064_001_002, TRT: 0:31:20 ?
Actor and theatrical director Lloyd Richards remembers his youth in Detroit and his budding interest in the theater. After describing race relations in Detroit, he recalls his college experiences at Wayne State University and his brief stint in the Army during World War II. Richards then discusses his early career as a social worker and joining his first theater company, the Actors Company in Detroit.
- Video Oral History Interview with Lloyd Richards, Section A2001_064_001_003, TRT: 0:31:10 ?
Actor and theatrical director Lloyd Richards recalls his early career with The Actors Company in Detroit, reviewing his roles and describing his acting on stage and on the radio. He then recounts moving to New York to pursue his interest in acting. He recalls lessons he learned from acting in New York, including that talent wasn't always as important as looks. Richards details his roles in many off-Broadway shows, and explains how he built a successful acting resume.
- Video Oral History Interview with Lloyd Richards, Section A2001_064_001_004, TRT: 0:31:15 ?
Actor and theatrical director Lloyd Richards details his early acting career in New York, crediting his collaborator Paul Mann with helping him find many roles. He then recalls his big break on Broadway, starring in the one act play Freight. He then details his transition into directing, explaining how his connection to Sidney Poitier led to his directing Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun. Richards details his work on the play and talks about his transition from acting to directing.
- Video Oral History Interview with Lloyd Richards, Section A2001_064_001_005, TRT: 0:29:35 ?
Actor and theatrical director Lloyd Richards details his direction of Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun on Broadway. It marked the first time a black director and writer opened a show on Broadway. Richards discusses the casting process and fundraising for the show, and recalls opening the show to rave reviews. He talks about touring the country with the show, assesses the reasons for the show's popularity, and remembers Hansberry.
- Video Oral History Interview with Lloyd Richards, Section A2001_064_001_006, TRT: 0:31:12 ?

Actor and theatrical director Lloyd Richards recalls his partnership with playwrights such as Wole Soyinka and August Wilson. He also recounts his experiences as artistic director of the National Playwrights' Conference and as dean of the Yale University School of Drama. Richards concludes by reflecting on the course of his career and considering his legacy.

Video Oral History Interview with Lloyd Richards, Section A2001_064_001_007, TRT: 0:10:30 ?

Lloyd Richards narrates his photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Lloyd Richards, Section A2001_064_001_008, TRT: 0:04:50 ?

Lloyd Richards narrates his photographs.