

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Harry Belafonte

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Belafonte, Harry, 1927-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Harry Belafonte,
Dates:	November 2, 2000
Bulk Dates:	2000
Physical Description:	Betacame SP videocassettes ().
Abstract:	Singer and civil rights activist Harry Belafonte (1927 - 2023) was best known for his extensive acting and music career. His third album, <i>Calypso</i> , became the first in history to sell more than one million copies. He worked closely with civil rights leaders, and mobilized the arts community to address issues of civil and human rights, war, and famine throughout Africa. Belafonte was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 2, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2000_077
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Born to immigrant parents in Harlem on March 1, 1927, Harry Belafonte spent much of his youth in his mother's home country of Jamaica. Though difficult, life in Jamaica was full of rich cultural experiences that influenced Belafonte's art.

At the beginning of World War II, Belafonte returned to Harlem with his mother and brother. He had trouble integrating into the new environment and later dropped out of high school to join the U.S. Navy. After Belafonte was honorably discharged, he went back to New York, where he worked odd jobs until two free tickets to the American Negro Theatre (A.N.T.) changed his life.

Belafonte auditioned for the A.N.T. and earned his first leading role in *Juno and the Paycock*. In 1953, he made his film debut opposite Dorothy Dandridge in *Bright Road*. He won a Tony in 1954 for his performance in *Almanac*. At the same time, Belafonte developed his singing talents, having parlayed a series of nightclub performances into a record contract. His third album, *Calypso*, topped the charts for thirty-one consecutive weeks and was the first record to sell more than 1 million copies. Belafonte also secured a television outlet with his hour-long special, *Tonight with Belafonte*, which won him an Emmy. He became the first African American TV producer and his company, HarBel, went on to produce one Emmy nominee after another.

In the early 1950s, Belafonte developed a strong relationship with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Belafonte worked tirelessly to mobilize artists in support of the civil rights movement. In 1985, he again rallied the global artistic community to raise awareness of the famines, wars and droughts plaguing many African nations. USA for Africa raised more than \$60 million for this cause with "We Are the World" and Hands Across America. A longtime anti-apartheid activist, Belafonte hosted former South African President Nelson Mandela on his triumphant visit to the

United States. Belafonte maintained his commitment to service as a UNICEF goodwill ambassador.

Harry Belafonte passed away on April 25, 2023 at the age of 96.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Harry Belafonte was conducted by Danny Glover on November 2, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on Betacame SP videocassettes. Singer and civil rights activist Harry Belafonte (1927 - 2023) was best known for his extensive acting and music career. His third album, Calypso, became the first in history to sell more than one million copies. He worked closely with civil rights leaders, and mobilized the arts community to address issues of civil and human rights, war, and famine throughout Africa.

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:

Belafonte, Harry, 1927-

Glover, Danny (Interviewer)

N/A (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Belafonte, Harry, 1927---Interviews

African American singers--United States--Interviews.

African American political activists--United States--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Entertainer

HistoryMakers® Category:

EntertainmentMakers

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 Harry Belafonte, November 2, 2000. 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