

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Jackie Taylor

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Taylor, Jackie
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Jackie Taylor,
Dates:	May 28, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:01:29).
Abstract:	Stage actress, stage director, and stage producer Jackie Taylor (1951 -) has produced more than 100 plays and musical biographies, including, "The Other Cinderella," and, "Muddy Waters." Taylor also founded the Black Ensemble Theater in 1976, and contributes to the community by teaching troubled students, and serving as the president of the African American Arts Alliance. Taylor was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 28, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2002_092
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Jacqueline Elizabeth Taylor was born on August 10, 1951 in Chicago, Illinois and was raised in the Cabrini Green housing project. She rose from modest roots to become a distinguished actress, singer, director, playwright and theater founder. As the founder of the Black Ensemble Theater, she has created a strong institution.

Taylor attended St. Joseph Elementary School, where she started writing plays, poetry and stories from the age of eight. She gained recognition for her talents, and in seventh grade began directing. Continuing her education, she earned a B.A. in 1973 from Loyola University, where she majored in theater with an education minor. That year, she began working with Free Street Theater. Taylor got her first film break in 1975's *Cooley High*. Producing and starring in television and film - as well as in theatrical productions with such companies as the Goodman Theater, Organic Theater and Victory Gardens Theater - Taylor came to the realization that Hollywood would continue to present African Americans negatively. Taylor decided to try to control some of the images herself and so, in 1976, founded the Black Ensemble Theater. She serves as producer and director with a mission of producing plays that cut across racial and cultural lines, bringing people together. She has written and produced more than 100 plays and musical biographies, including *The Other Cinderella* and *The Hootchie Cootchie Man: Muddy Waters*, which Taylor co-wrote with Jimmy Tillman.

Taylor cares about contributing to the lives of youth. She has taught in the Chicago Public Schools through organizations like the Illinois Arts Council and Urban Gateways, where she served as assistant director of special projects. As a teacher, she likes the challenge of working with troubled students. Through a program called "Strengthening the School Through Theater Arts," she has shared her skills by showing teachers how to use theater to focus students' energy and creativity. As a testimonial, the Boys and Girls Club of America awarded her for her work with youth.

Taylor serves as the president of the African American Arts Alliance. She previously served as artistic director for the Regal Theater and vice president of the League of Chicago Theater. She has consulted with major cultural organizations. The City of Chicago honored her by naming a street after her. She has one daughter, Tynea.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Jackie Taylor was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 28, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Stage actress, stage director, and stage producer Jackie Taylor (1951 -) has produced more than 100 plays and musical biographies, including, "The Other Cinderella," and, "Muddy Waters." Taylor also founded the Black Ensemble Theater in 1976, and contributes to the community by teaching troubled students, and serving as the president of the African American Arts Alliance.

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:

Taylor, Jackie

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Bieschke, Paul (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Taylor, Jackie--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Stage Actress

Stage Director

Stage Producer

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 Jackie Taylor, May 28, 2002. 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 Jackie Taylor, Section A2002_092_001_001, TRT: 0:30:17 ?

Jackie Taylor talks about her parents' origins and her struggles with growing up with an alcoholic father and a mother who was continually frustrated and disappointed with her station in life. She then talks fondly about her aunt who served as a role model and whom Taylor turned to for guidance when her situation at home became difficult. Taylor then recalls earlier, happier memories from her childhood prior to her family's move to the Cabrini Green public housing project in Chicago. She shares stories about growing up in Cabrini Green and using her creative talents to avoid getting into fights. Lastly, Taylor talks about her educational experiences in the Catholic school system.

Video Oral History Interview with Jackie Taylor, Section A2002_092_001_002, TRT: 0:30:22 ?

Jackie Taylor recalls the two adults who served as her mentors as a child and led her to her current career path in the dramatic arts. She continues to talk fondly of Sister Celestine, a teacher at her Catholic grade school in Chicago. Taylor then details how Sister Celestine went so far as to help her choose a high school that would continue to nurture her acting talents. She then shares her experiences in high school and drama school at Loyola University. Jackie Taylor talks about her activities with Free Street, a traveling company that performs in troubled urban areas like the Cabrini-Green housing project where she spent her childhood. She then recalls the career choices she made attempting to juggle acting with marriage and motherhood. Lastly, Taylor details how she landed the supporting role in the cult movie classic, 'Cooley High'.

Video Oral History Interview with Jackie Taylor, Section A2002_092_001_003, TRT: 0:29:48 ?

Jackie Taylor talks about the founding of Black Ensemble Theater and the difficulties she experienced in getting funding and producing her first performance. She then talks briefly about her other movie roles she took in order to finance the continued success of the Black Ensemble Theater. Taylor details the Theater's various venues and its uniqueness in being a thriving black theater companies on Chicago's North Side. Lastly Taylor talks about her other activities in the performing arts and the subject matter she chooses for the Black Ensemble Theater's to perform.

Video Oral History Interview with Jackie Taylor, Section A2002_092_001_004, TRT: 0:31:02 ?

Jackie Taylor details how she researches for her productions for the Black Ensemble Theater. She then describes the working relationship she has with her Musical Director, Jimmy Tillman. Taylor then talks about how she would like to be remembered, and talks about how she also uses all-black casts in classic plays to break down racial barriers in the theater. She then shares her thoughts on whether her parents would be proud of the accomplishments in her career. Lastly, Taylor describes photos of her family and career she provided.