

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Amy Tate Billingsley

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Billingsley, Amy Tate, 1936-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Amy Tate Billingsley,
<b>Dates:</b>	April 26, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:28:30).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Civic leader Amy Tate Billingsley (1936 - ) was heavily involved in events planning, marketing and organizing for several significant projects. She worked in the William J. Clinton Administration with Historically Black Colleges and Universities and with Labor Secretary Alexis Herman. Billingsley was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 26, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_093
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Civic leader Amy Tate Billingsley was born on November 29, 1936 in Chicago, Illinois to parents Herman Tate and Inez Duke Tate, who were both active leaders educational in local and international co-op communities. Billingsley's great-grandfather, Jesse Chisholm Duke, was a prominent newspaper editor and activist in Montgomery, Alabama and Pine Bluff, Arkansas during the 1880s and 1890s; her grandfather, noted architectural engineer Charles Sumner Duke, was the first African American graduate in mathematics at Harvard University in 1905, founder of the National Technical Association in 1926, and the supervising engineer of the Public Works Administration in the Virgin Islands from 1946 to 1951.

Billingsley was raised in Chicago, attended John D. Shoop Elementary School, the University of Chicago High School (the Lab School), and Morgan Park High School. She then enrolled at the University of Chicago, receiving her A.B. degree in mathematics and education in 1958. She went on to earn her M.A. degree in counseling psychology from Ohio State University in 1961, and her M.B.A. degree in marketing and management from the University of Baltimore in 1982.

Billingsley travelled to the Republic of Senegal, West Africa with the non-profit organization, Operations Crossroads Africa, and then worked at Harvard University's Center for Research in the Study of Personality. In 1961, she married Brandeis University student Andrew Billingsley, becoming instrumental in his many landmark publications including the classical sociological text *Black Families in White America*. Her work with political campaigns, started with one candidate's 1966 campaign for California Assemblyman, which lead to the successful political career of Congressman Ronald Dellums. Billingsley's participation in the campaigns of Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley and Atlanta Congressman Andrew Young were precursors to her significant involvement in the presidential campaigns of William J. Clinton, Al Gore, and John Kerry. In the 1990s, Billingsley worked with the Clinton Administration in the White House Public Liaison Office; as Program Manager at the White House

Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities; and as Special Assistant to U.S. Labor Secretary Alexis Herman.

Billingsley was a founder of Black Women's Agenda, Inc. in 1977, and has served on the board of the National Black M.B.A. Association (N.B.M.B.A.A.). In 1982, Billingsley started Amistad Associates, and since has been a consultant on national projects for clients including, marketing for Dr. Dorothy I. Height's *Open Wide the Freedom Gates: A Memoir*, serving as a Regional Coordinator for *The HistoryMakers*, and coordinating organizational projects for Tom and Barbara Skinner's Leadership Institute Seminars For Upper Level Executives.

Billingsley lives in Washington, DC. She was married to Andrew Billingsley for nearly 40 years, with whom she had two daughters, Angela Billingsley and Bonita Billingsley Harris, and three granddaughters.

Amy Tate Billingsley was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on April 26, 2003.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Amy Tate Billingsley was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 26, 2003, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Civic leader Amy Tate Billingsley (1936 - ) was heavily involved in events planning, marketing and organizing for several significant projects. She worked in the William J. Clinton Administration with Historically Black Colleges and Universities and with Labor Secretary Alexis Herman.

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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:

Billingsley, Amy Tate, 1936-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Billingsley, Amy Tate, 1936---Interviews

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Women political consultants--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:

Civic Leader

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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 Amy Tate Billingsley, April 26, 2003. 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).

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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 Amy Tate Billingsley, Section A2003\_093\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:50 ?

Amy Billingsley was born on November 29, 1936 in Chicago, Illinois to Inez Duke Tate and Herman Tate. Her great-grandparents were born into slavery. Jessie Chisholm Duke was born in 1853 and his wife, Willie Black, was born in 1861. Duke learned to read and write from his mistress. He worked as a mail clerk and as a teacher. Founder of the Montgomery Alabama Herald, Duke was run out of town after he wrote an editorial against a neighborhood lynching. His life was studied by Professor Allen Jones at Auburn University in Auburn, Alabama. Billingsley's maternal grandfather, Charles Sumner Duke, graduated from Harvard University in 1904. He as an architectural engineer in Chicago, Illinois and for the Farm Security Administration in Washington, D.C., building Virginia's Aberdeen Gardens and installing the Virgin Islands' sanitation system. Billingsley's father was raised in Arkansas. After graduating from the University of Chicago, where he met his wife, he worked as a postal clerk and helped found the Circle Pines Center in Cloverdale, Michigan. Billingsley's mother was raised in Chicago and became a school teacher.

Women political consultants--Interviews

Video Oral History Interview with Amy Tate Billingsley, Section A2003\_093\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

Amy Billingsley describes the sights, sounds, and smells of her childhood in Chicago's Morgan Park neighborhood. Her paternal grandmother, Salina Veasey, lived with her family. Billingsley attended John D. Shoop Elementary School with her sister, HistoryMaker Eileen Cline. Teachers at the school included their mother, Inez Duke Tate, and HistoryMaker Barbara Sizemore. Billingsley also remembers influential teachers like Miss Evelyn Jackson and Mr. Stewart who taught black history and instilled racial pride in their pupils. As a young girl, Billingsley received drama instruction from her mother and attended Mildred Hessler's ballet school. The family also attended the Eighth Church of Christ Scientist in Chicago. Billingsley's parents belonged to the large black middle class in Chicago comprised of postal workers, school teachers, and Pullman Porters. Billingsley attended the integrated University of Chicago Laboratory School from 1949 to 1952. Both her father and her grandmother died in 1952. Billingsley then attended Morgan Park High School. In 1954, she enrolled at the University of Chicago. Before graduating in 1958, Billingsley spent a year at Reed College in Portland, Oregon.

Video Oral History Interview with Amy Tate Billingsley, Section A2003\_093\_001\_003, TRT: 0:31:15 ?

Amy Billingsley transferred to Reed College in Portland, Oregon, but finished her studies at the University of Chicago in 1958. She then worked with the American Friends Service Committee Project at the Henry Booth House in Chicago, Illinois. Billingsley left there to study counseling psychology at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. In 1961, Billingsley worked under James

Herman Robinson at Operations Crossroads Africa. Later that year, she married sociologist Andrew Billingsley. They moved to Berkeley, California where their home became a hub of socio-political and cultural activity for black intellectuals like HistoryMaker Ronald Dellums and Alex Haley. Billingsley talks about “Black Families in White America” which she co-authored with her husband. She also reflects on Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King’s assassination. Billingsley describes the Berkeley Free Speech Movement and black intellectuals at Howard University in Washington D.C. in the early 1970s. In 1975, Billingsley moved to Baltimore, Maryland after her husband was appointed president of Morgan State University. She also talks about her life-long community activism.

Video Oral History Interview with Amy Tate Billingsley, Section A2003\_093\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Amy Billingsley describes her passion for political empowerment. As a political organizer, she worked on Otho Green’s and HistoryMaker Ronald Dellums’ campaigns for California legislature. She also helped organize the mayoral campaigns of Thomas Bradley and HistoryMaker Andrew Young. Billingsley also talks about Project Follow-Through and the benefits of intergenerational gatherings. Nationally, Billingsley worked on the campaigns of Walter Mondale in 1984, President Bill Clinton in 1996, and Al Gore in 2000. She talks about the 2000 presidential election, the Lewinsky scandal, and the right wing agenda. After moving to Washington, D.C., Billingsley witnessed the apathy of disenfranchised residents in the nation’s capital. She describes her role at the National Association for Equal Opportunity and Higher Education (NAFEO) and with the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, prior to which she worked with Alexis Herman. She reflects upon her hopes and concerns for the African American community. Billingsley founded Amistad Associates, a consulting firm in 1982.

Video Oral History Interview with Amy Tate Billingsley, Section A2003\_093\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:45 ?

Amy Tate Billingsley continues to describe her hopes and concerns for the African American community. She talks about the Tulsa race riot of 1921, the Bakke decision of 1978, and the need for reparations. Billingsley also describes HistoryMaker Dorothy Height; the former U.S. Secretary of Labor Alexis Herman; and HistoryMaker Ronald Dellums, the former mayor of Oakland, California. She reflects upon her legacy and how she would like to be remembered. Billingsley closes by narrating her photographs.