

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Synthia Saint James

PERSON

Saint James, Synthia , 1949-

Alternative Names: Saint James, Synthia , 1949-;

Life Dates: February 11, 1949-

Place of Birth: Bronx, New York

Residence: Los Angeles, California (from ? to ?)

Occupations: ; Visual Artist

Biographical Note

Painter Synthia Saint James was born in Los Angeles, California to Henrietta Ellastein Talbird and William Jasper James on February 11, 1949. James attended public school in both Los Angeles, California and New York City. During her senior year at Los Angeles High School, she was crowned as the first African American homecoming queen. After graduating high school, James briefly attended Los Angeles Valley College, worked as a writer for Shelter Records and later worked in the media department of Disney Studios.

James' career as an artist began in 1969 when she sold a painting in New York City to one of her co-workers. She continued to work in corporate America in the accounting department, only painting in her spare time. In 1984, she developed her unique style of painting human figures without facial features. She has completed more than forty commissioned works for individuals and organizations such as Mridgitte Matteuzzi's School of Modern Jazz Ballet, The Los Angeles Women's Foundation, "Essence Magazine" and attorney Johnnie Cochran. In addition, her artwork has appeared on the covers of numerous books, including works by Alice Walker, Terry McMillan and Julia Boyd. In 1997, James was chosen by the United States Postal Service to create the first Kwanzaa stamp.

James has written more than a dozen children's books, she is the author of two books of poetry and prose, entitled "Girlfriends" and "Can I Touch You: Love Poems and Affirmations" and wrote a multi-cultural cookbook "Creative Fixings From the Kitchen." James' pieces have been featured in galleries around the globe, including exhibitions at the Musée Des Duncans, The

Chicago Art Institute and Cosmopolitan Artists. She has received numerous awards, including a 1997 Coretta Scott King Honor and a Parent's Choice Silver Honor for her children's book "Sunday."

Synthia Saint James was interviewed by "The HistoryMakers" on November 16, 2004.

Related Entries

Vanessa [SIBLINGOF]
Sister

Toya [SIBLINGOF]
Sister

Tanya [SIBLINGOF]
Sister

Trena [SIBLINGOF]
Sister

Guy [SIBLINGOF]
Brother

Eric [SIBLINGOF]
Brother

Dwayne [SIBLINGOF]
Brother

Henry [SIBLINGOF]
Brother

William [SIBLINGOF]
Brother

Frank [SIBLINGOF]
Brother

Talbird, Henry [GRANDCHILDOf]
Grandfather (M)

Talbird, Victoria [GRANDCHILDOf]
Grandmother (M)

Unknown [GREATGRANDCHILDOf]
Great Grandmother

Unknown [GRANDCHILDOf]
Great-grandfather

Unknown [GRANDCHILDOf]
Great-grandfather

James, William Jasper [CHILDOf]
Father

Talbird, Henrietta Ellastein [CHILDOf]
Mother

Los Angeles High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to 1967]

Alta Loma Elementary [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Macy's Department Stores [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1968 to ?]

Accounting clerk

Accounting Arts [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1979 to 1991]

Founder, owner

Atelier Saint James [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1980 to 2011]

Founder

Bunker Hill Art League [MEMBEROF]
Member

Personal Papers, 2 boxes University of Minnesota, Minneapolis