

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dolores White

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	White, Dolores
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dolores White,
Dates:	January 13, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:16:31).
Abstract:	Music composer and pianist Dolores White (-) was a professor of music at a variety of universities and colleges, including Wooster College; Hartt School of Music; Cleveland Music School; Karamu House; and the Metropolitan Campus of Cuyahoga Community College. White was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 13, 2005, in Cleveland, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_012
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Composer and pianist Dolores White is a native of Chicago, Illinois. White received her bachelors of music degree in piano from Oberlin College Conservatory, and her masters of music degree in piano and composition from the Cleveland Institute of Music, where her teachers included Ruth Edwards, Donald Erb, and Eugene O'Brien. White completed additional studies with James Friskin of the Juilliard School of Music; at Howard University with Cecil Cohen; at Columbia Teachers' College with Robert Pace; and at Ohio State University with Thomas Wells.

White held positions at several colleges, universities, and arts organizations, including Wooster College; Hartt School of Music; Cleveland Music School; Karamu House; and the Metropolitan Campus of Cuyahoga Community College, where she served as assistant professor of music. Since her retirement from teaching in 2000, White has continued to compose vocal and instrumental works.

White is the recipient of commissions and grants from the American Society of Composers; the Bascom Little Foundation; Wooster College for the Arts; Cleveland Chamber Symphony; University of Akron Percussion Ensemble; Cleveland Women's Symphony Orchestra; Cleveland Composers Guild; and the National Women's Conference of the University of Akron. White was honored by the American Women's Heritage Society and was selected by the YWCA as a Professional Woman of Achievement in Ohio. Ludwig Music Publishing Company and Boston Music Company publish White's works. In addition to composing, White has conducted numerous workshops and lectures on such topics as women in music, Afro-Cuban music and dance, and African American arts.

Dolores White and her husband, cellist Donald White, raised two children: Diana and Darrow.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dolores White was conducted by Regennia Williams on January 13, 2005, in Cleveland, Ohio, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Music composer and pianist Dolores White (-) was a professor of music at a variety of universities and colleges, including Wooster College; Hartt School of Music; Cleveland Music School; Karamu House; and the Metropolitan Campus of Cuyahoga Community College.

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:

White, Dolores

Williams, Regennia (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

White, Dolores--Interviews

African American music teachers--Interviews

African American women composers--Interviews

African American musicians--Interviews

Women pianists--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Pianist

Music Composer

HistoryMakers® Category:

MusicMakers

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 Dolores White, January 13, 2005. 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 Dolores White, Section A2005_012_001_001, TRT: 0:28:20 ?

Dolores White was born on June 17 on the South Side of Chicago, Illinois. Her mother, Lillian Marie Dumas, was born in Evansville, Indiana. Her father was born in Atlanta, Georgia. They divorced when White was three years old. Both of her parents' families moved to Chicago, Illinois as part of the Great Migration. White was interested in dance and theatre from an early age due to the influence of her mother and maternal aunt, who were both teachers. Her aunt was a student of Lorraine Hansberry and friends with HistoryMaker Katherine Dunham. In her childhood, White took dance and piano lessons, which spurred her love for classical music. She listened to the symphony hour with her maternal grandparents and frequented The Regal Theater in Chicago. After a few years at St. Anselm School, she transferred and completed her elementary education at Frances Willard School. Although many of its school clubs were segregated, White joined the orchestra and played the cello at Robert Lindblom Technical High School.

African American music teachers--Interviews.

African American women composers--Interviews.

African American musicians--Interviews.

Women pianists--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Dolores White, Section A2005_012_001_002, TRT: 0:28:50 ?

Dolores White knew she wanted to be a musician from an early age and was inspired to pursue an artistic career by family friend HistoryMaker Margret Burroughs. After her parents' divorce, White still spent time with her father regularly. She also visited her father's twin brother often; she enjoyed spending time with his children until his wife ran off with HistoryMaker Quincy Jones' father, moving her cousins to Seattle, Washington. White's mother eventually remarried Cornelius W. Johnson, a commercial artist. White attended Howard University for two years at her mother's insistence that she attend a historically black university. White later transferred to Oberlin College in Ohio. The strict music program and its dedicated students provided a nurturing environment for her to develop her talent; however, the campus was still subtly segregated despite Oberlin's history of early integration. White also recalls the professional achievements of her maternal family and early responses to blues and jazz music.

Video Oral History Interview with Dolores White, Section A2005_012_001_003, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Dolores White received her bachelor's degree in music from Oberlin College in Ohio. She met husband, HistoryMaker Donald White, at a talent show in Chicago, Illinois, and they married in 1956. After living in New York City briefly, White and her husband moved to Hartford, Connecticut where White taught at Hartt College. When her husband was hired by the Cleveland Orchestra, they relocated to Cleveland, Ohio. While teaching at Karamu House and the Cleveland Music School Settlement, White performed at both places and in other local venues including Severance Hall. She also taught music part-time at Cuyahoga Community College. White decided to pursue her master's degree in composition at the Cleveland Institute of Music. She studied under Donald Erb and Eugene O'Brien. The curriculum there during the 1970s contrasted with the more traditional, classical one at Oberlin College, and White enjoyed its emphasis on non-European musical traditions. White also talks about her two

children and their musical careers.

Video Oral History Interview with Dolores White, Section A2005_012_001_004, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Dolores White was an assistant professor of music at Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, Ohio until 2000. While there, White benefitted from working with fellow African American colleagues but still experienced the difficulties of advancing in academia as an African American. When White took over teaching a jazz class, she realized the course needed to focus more on African American musicians, so she began searching for more inclusive textbooks. She developed her curriculum to highlight African American and world music traditions. As part of this effort, she taught HistoryMaker Bernice Johnson Reagon's gospel series, 'Wade in the Water.' Although the field of ethno-musicology has developed since White's undergraduate education, she finds that music studies and music history courses at American colleges and universities are limited in their inclusion of non-European musicians and musical forms. White reflects upon the current status of music education and music history in the United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Dolores White, Section A2005_012_001_005, TRT: 0:20:51 ?

Dolores White left Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, Ohio with the intent of focusing on her career as a music composer. Before devoting herself solely to composing, she taught African American music courses at The College of Wooster in Wooster, Ohio. She also taught introductory music courses at Kent State University at Geauga in Burton, Ohio. As a musical composer, White finds inspiration in all sounds and mediums of music. She draws upon her classical training, her knowledge of jazz and the sounds of the twenty-first century to inspire her work. White talks about technological innovations in the field of music composition, explaining why computers are useful, though she prefers more traditional means. White describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community and concludes by reflecting upon her legacy.