

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Hattie Winston Wheeler

PERSON

Winston, Hattie

**Alternative Names:** Hattie Winston Wheeler;

**Life Dates:** March 3, 1945-

**Place of Birth:** Lexington, Mississippi, USA

**Residence:** Encino, CA

**Occupations:** Actress

## Biographical Note

Actress Hattie Mae Winston was born in Lexington, Mississippi, on March 3, 1945, to Selena Thurmond Winston and Roosevelt Love Winston. Winston was raised by her grandmother, Cora Thurmond, in nearby Greenville, Mississippi. Attending Washington Irving High School in New York City, Winston graduated in 1963; throughout her academic career she was an accomplished student and an exceptionally talented vocalist. Winston attended Howard University in Washington, D.C. after receiving a full voice

scholarship.

Winston moved back to New York City after one year at Howard and enrolled in an actor's group study workshop; success came quickly. In 1968, Winston became a replacement performer in *Hair*, in 1969 obtained a part in *Does a Tiger Wear a Necktie?*, and in 1970 was cast in *The Me Nobody Knows*, all of which were significant Broadway roles. In 1971, Winston was cast in a replacement role in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. In 1983, Winston scored a starring role in the critically acclaimed Broadway play *The Tap Dance Kid*. Winston's roles in *To Take Up Arms* and *Up the Mountain* earned her two Los Angeles Critics Drama-Logue awards; throughout her career, she received a variety of other theatrical honors, including two Obie Awards (for *Mother Courage* and *The Michigan*), CEBA Awards, and an Audelco Award for her contributions to the world of theater. Winston also worked as an independent producer and director, and was responsible for reviving Langston Hughes's *Black Nativity* off-Broadway.

Winston worked extensively in the worlds of television and film; she had a regular role on the Emmy-award winning PBS-TV series *The Electric Company*, where she played Sylvia, in addition to playing Gloria Davis in the critically acclaimed series *Homefront*. Winston's other television credits include *Nurse*, *E.R.*, *Port Charles*, *The Parent Hood*, *Malcolm & Eddie*, *The Smart Guy*, *Scrubs*, and *Becker*. Winston's film credits include *Jackie Brown*, *Meet the Deedles*, *Beverly Hills Cop III*, and Clint Eastwood's *True Crime*.

Winston served as the national co-chair for the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA)'s Equal Employment Opportunities Committee. In 1993 and 1997, the National Black Theater Festival in Winston-Salem, North Carolina honored Winston with the designation of a "Hattie Winston Day." Over the course of her career, Winston collected scripts and screenplays by African American

writers, many of which remain unpublished; in 1998, she donated a collection of writing entitled the Hattie Winston African American Scripts and Screenplays Collection to the University of Louisville in Kentucky. In 2006, Winston participated in the reading “Slave Narratives: A Mighty, Mighty People” for Stories On Stage, a non-profit performing arts organization presenting popular local and national actors in dramatic readings of short fiction.

## Related Entries

**Washington Irving High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Sacred Heart School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Howard University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Negro Ensemble Company** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1967 to ?]

**Member**

**'The Electric Company'** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1973 to 1977]

**Actress**

**'Homefront'** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1991 to 1993]

**Actress**

**'Becker'** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1998 to 2004]

**Actress**

**AFTRA** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Member, CEO Committee**

**Break the Cycle** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**Onyx Village** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Co-Founder**