

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Angela Jackson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Jackson, Angela, 1951-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Angela Jackson,
Dates:	November 22, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:40:20).
Abstract:	Playwright and poet Angela Jackson (1951 -) has won numerous awards for her work. Jackson is actively involved in Chicago's Organization of Black American Culture, where she has mentored young black writers. Jackson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 22, 2005, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_247
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Angela Jackson, poet, playwright and fictionist, was born July 25, 1951, in Greenville, Mississippi. Her father, George Jackson, Sr. and mother, Angeline Robinson Jackson moved to Chicago where Jackson attended St. Anne's Catholic School. Fascinated with books, Jackson frequented the Kelly Branch Library and admired Chicago's Gwendolyn Brooks. She graduated from Loretto Academy in 1968 with a pre-med scholarship to Northwestern University. In 1977, Jackson received her B.A. degree from Northwestern University and went on to earn her M.A. degree from the University of Chicago.

At Northwestern University, Jackson joined FMO, the black student union. Influenced by artist Jeff Donaldson and visiting poet Margaret Walker, she was invited by Johnson Publishing's *Black World* magazine editor, Hoyt W. Fuller, to join the Organization for Black American Culture (OBAC), where she stayed as a member for twenty years. At OBAC, Fuller mentored young black writers like Haki Madhubuti (Don L. Lee), Carolyn Rodgers, Sterling Plumpp and others. Jackson was praised as a reader and performer on Chicago's burgeoning black literary scene. First published nationally in *Black World* in 1971, Jackson's first book of poetry, *Voodoo Love Magic* was published by Third World Press in 1974. She won the eighth Conrad Kent Rivers Memorial Award in 1973; the Academy of American Poets Award from Northwestern University in 1974; the Illinois Art Council Creative Writing Fellowship in Fiction in 1979; a National Endowment For the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship in Fiction in 1980; the Hoyt W. Fuller Award for Literary Excellence in 1984; the American Book Award in 1985; the DuSable Museum Writers Seminar Poetry Prize in 1984; Pushcart Prize for Poetry in 1989; ETA Gala Award in 1994; Illinois Authors Literary Heritage Award in 1996; six Illinois Arts Council Literary Awards; five for fiction and one for poetry; The Carl Sandburg Award; Chicago Sun-Times Friends of Literature Book of the Year Award; an Illinois Art Council Creative Writing Fellowship in Playwriting in 2000; and in 2002, the Shelley Memorial Award of the Poetry Society of America.

Jackson's published poetic works include: *The Greenville Club*, 1977 (chapbook); *Solo in the Boxcar Third Floor E*, 1985; *The Man with the White Liver*, 1987; *Dark Legs and Silk Kisses: The Beatitudes of the Spinners*, 1993; and *All These Roads Be Luminous: Poems New and Selected*, 1997, which was nominated for the National Book Award. Her plays include *Witness!*, 1970; *Shango Diaspora: An African American Myth of Womanhood and Love*, 1980; and *When the Wind Blows*, 1984 (better known as the eta production entitled, *Comfort Stew*). Jackson is working on *Treemont Stone*, a novel; *Lightfoot: The Crystal Stair*, a play; her memoir, *Apprenticeship in the House of Cowrie Shells*; and more poems.

Jackson lives and works in Chicago, Illinois.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Angela Jackson was conducted by Larry Crowe on November 22, 2005, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Playwright and poet Angela Jackson (1951 -) has won numerous awards for her work. Jackson is actively involved in Chicago's Organization of Black American Culture, where she has mentored young black

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:

Jackson, Angela, 1951-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Jackson, Angela, 1951---Interviews

African American women poets--Interviews

African American women dramatists--Interviews

African American women novelists--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Playwright

Poet

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 Angela Jackson, November 22, 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 2/5/2020 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 Angela Jackson, Section
A2005_247_001_001, TRT: 0:28:20 2005/11/22

Angela Jackson was born July 25, 1951 in Greenville, Mississippi to Angeline Virginia Robinson Jackson and George Jackson, Sr. Her mother was born on November 26, 1921 in Indianola, Mississippi to land-owning farmers. Jackson recalls stories of East Indian and Creek ancestors, and of one ancestor named Queen Victoria Street. Jackson's mother and her family survived the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and attended a one-room schoolhouse in Indianola as a child before enrolling at the Sacred Heart High School in Greenville, Mississippi. Sacred Heart was a Catholic school, and Jackson's mother graduated as valedictorian of her class. Jackson's father, George Jackson, Sr., was born on April 16, 1921 in

Winterville, Mississippi to Mary Mariah Jefferson Jackson. Jackson's paternal great great-grandmother crossed the Atlantic Ocean to the United States in 1821. Jackson's father attended Mississippi Trade School for the Colored. Her parents met in Greenville, and moved to Chicago, Illinois around 1951.

African American women poets--Interviews.

African American women dramatists--Interviews.

African American women novelists--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Angela Jackson, Section
A2005_247_001_002, TRT: 0:28:30 2005/11/22

Angela Jackson's parents were married on May 26, 1940. Her father served in the U.S. Army as a member of the Occupation Forces in Germany and France from 1944 until 1946. Upon returning to the United States, he did not want to live in the segregated South; and, in 1951, he moved to Chicago, Illinois and began working at the post office. In 1952, the rest of Jackson's family joined him in Chicago. Jackson describes her siblings, including her two brothers, George and Prentiss, and six sisters. Jackson attended St. Anne's School in Chicago. She shares her earliest memories of her neighborhood, including playing on Garfield Boulevard and walking to Kelly Branch Library, and reflects on how the neighborhood was destroyed by the construction of the Day Ryan Expressway. She recalls wanting to be a writer from an early age. She also talks about the racism she experienced when traveling to Greenville, Mississippi in 1962, the ways it differed from the North, and the Chinese population in Greenville.

Video Oral History Interview with Angela Jackson, Section
A2005_247_001_003, TRT: 0:28:10 2005/11/22

Angela Jackson attended St. Anne's School in Chicago, Illinois, where she skipped the fourth and fifth grades. She recalls her classmates and the independence and dedication of the Mercy Order of Nuns who taught at the school. She also reflects on the writers that influenced her, including Gwendolyn Brooks, Lorraine Hansberry, and the character Jo from Louisa May Alcott's "Little Women." Jackson attended Loretto Academy High School in

Chicago's Woodlawn neighborhood, located in Blackstone Rangers gang territory, which was led by nuns from the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Aspiring to be a doctor, Jackson did well in biology and attended a biomedical careers program sponsored by the University of Chicago on Saturdays. She also wrote plays and edited the school anthology with her friends. She graduated from high school in 1968.

Video Oral History Interview with Angela Jackson, Section
A2005_247_001_004, TRT: 0:29:10 2005/11/22

Angela Jackson describes her political views in high school, and recalls debating the Vietnam War and attending Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s rally at Soldier Field in 1966. She talks about the scene on Chicago's south side after Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination in 1968, noting the military presence on the streets and the differences in reactions on the south and west sides of the city. After graduating from Loretto Academy High School in 1968, Jackson began her undergraduate studies in a summer program at Northwestern University, where she enrolled in the fall of that year. She describes that summer as a time in which she gained a sense of consciousness around her racial identity, including her decision to wear natural hair and embrace Malcolm X. Jackson also describes her early college years, during which she received advice from poet Margaret Walker, a job with HistoryMaker Jeff Donaldson, and an introduction to the Organization of Black American Culture (OBAC) from writer Hoyt Fuller.

Video Oral History Interview with Angela Jackson, Section
A2005_247_001_005, TRT: 0:29:30 2005/11/22

Angela Jackson describes the early years of the Organization of Black American Culture (OBAC), which was created in 1967. Jackson was an early member of the group, which occupied a storefront space in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood. Jackson describes the group as having been welcoming of African Americans of all walks of life. She recalls the meetings' structure and various organization members, including HistoryMakers Haki Madhubuti, Dr. Ann Smith, and Jeff Donaldson. She also describes the Black Peoples Topographical Research

Center, an organization formed in part by OBAC members that gave revolutionary lectures. From 1969 onward, Jackson worked and published her first book of poetry, "Voodoo Love Magic." In 1976, OBAC's storefront burned down, most likely due to a problem with a heater, and salvaged materials were taken to Northeastern University. She earned her B.A. from Northwestern in 1977.

Video Oral History Interview with Angela Jackson, Section
A2005_247_001_006, TRT: 0:29:30 2005/11/22

Angela Jackson talks about Black World magazine and what it meant for her and other young writers at the time. Black World, originally called Negro Digest, was HistoryMaker John H. Johnson's first magazine. Jackson describes its demise in 1977 as a huge loss for the African American community and for young African American writers. In 1977, Jackson attended Festac 77, the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, in Lagos, Nigeria. She became involved with festival preparations while working as a secretary for HistoryMaker Abena Joan Brown, and she attended with a host of other writers from Chicago, Illinois. In 1978, eta Creative Arts Foundation staged her first production, "Witness: a Voice Anthology of Poetry and Fiction"; and, in 1980, the Midwest Black Theater Alliance staged her first play, "Shango Diaspora." She talks about other writings, including her novel, "Treemont Stone," and her collection of poems, "Dark Legs and Silk Kisses," as well as the awards she received.

Video Oral History Interview with Angela Jackson, Section
A2005_247_001_007, TRT: 0:27:40 2005/11/22

Angela Jackson talks about her writing and teaching career and using popular culture subversively in her writing. She describes the places she has taught including Kennedy-King College in Chicago, Illinois; Columbia College in Chicago; and Howard University in Washington, D.C. In 1982, Jackson and author Sandra Jackson-Opoku co-wrote a book called "Tender Mending" under the pseudonym Lia Sanders, which Jackson talks about in the context of "light" entertainment, serious literature, and the duties of African American artists. At

the time of the interview, Jackson also describes her current writing projects and themes, as well as a one-woman show she created about Ida B. Wells. She describes a need for African American love stories, reflects on her life, her hopes and concerns for the African American community, her legacy, and how she would like to be remembered. She concludes by reading her poem, "Faith."

Video Oral History Interview with Angela Jackson, Section
A2005_247_001_008, TRT: 0:19:30 2005/11/22

Angela Jackson narrates her photographs.