

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ayoka Chenzira

PERSON

Chenzira, Ayoka

Alternative Names: Ayoka Chenzira;

Life Dates: November 8, 1953-

Place of Birth: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Work: Atlanta, GA

Occupations: Communications Professor; Animator;
Film Professor; Film Director

Biographical Note

Ayoka Chenzira was born on November 8, 1953, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Paul and Bernice Wilson. Chenzira was reared by her mother who owned a beauty parlor in the building where they lived in north Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Chenzira played the cello, field hockey and studied ballet for a number of years. She attended private boarding school during high school. After graduation, she attended The College of New Rochelle in Westchester, New York,

where she studied film and photography. Chenzira received her M.A degree in education from Columbia University and her B.F.A. degree in film production from New York University, where her thesis piece was *Syvilla: They Dance to her Drum*, a short film that documented the African American concert dancer, Syvilla Fort, who was her dance teacher.

As the chair of the department of media and communication arts at the City College of New York, Chenzira managed programs in advertising, public relations, journalism, film and video. She also co-created the City College of New York's first M.F.A in media arts production graduate program.

Chenzira is a prolific film artist whose works include features, performance art, documentaries, experimental productions and animation. In fact, she is considered the first African American female animator. In 2002, Chenzira was invited to serve as the first William and Camille Cosby Endowed Professor in the Arts at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, where she is creator and director of the Digital Moving Image Salon (DMIS) and teaches a year long research and production course. She also created and served as co-director of Oral Narratives and Digital Technology, a joint venture between Spelman College and the Durham Institute of Technology (DIT), where she designed and taught workshops primarily for Zulu students at DIT.

Chenzira lives in Atlanta, Georgia, and has one adult daughter.

Related Entries

Gesu School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Stephen Girard School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Philadelphia High School for Girls [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Lourdesmont School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

New York University [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Teachers College, Columbia University [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

Georgia Institute of Technology [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

'Syvilla: They Dance to Her Drum' [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Director

Hair Piece: A Film for Nappy-Headed People

[EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Director

On Becoming a Woman: Mothers and Daughters

Talking to Each Other [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Producer

Secret Sounds Screaming: The Sexual Abuse of

Children [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Director

The Lure and The Lore [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

Director

Zajota and the Boogie Spirit [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Director

Red Carnelian Films [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Founder and Director

The City College of New York [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Professor

Alma's Rainbow [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Director

In The Rivers of Mercy Angst [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Director

**Sentry at the Gate: The Comedy of Jane Galvin
Lewis** [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Director

Snowfire [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Director

Flying Over Purgatory [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Director and Screenwriter

Spelman College [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Professor and Chair

Third World Newsreel [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Member

Women Make Movies [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Member