



Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Shari Carpenter

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Shari Carpenter
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Shari Carpenter,
Dates:	January 31, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	5 Betacam SP videocassettes (2:23:09).
Abstract:	Filmmaker Shari Carpenter (1961 -) was one of the first African American script supervisors to join the film union Local 161. Carpenter was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 31, 2007, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_037
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Filmmaker Shari Carpenter was born on July 14, 1961 in Washington, D.C. She is one of the first African American script supervisors to join the film union Local 161. Her mother, Vivian Carpenter, was a homemaker and her father, Horace Carpenter, was an aspiring artist. As a child, Carpenter was a natural storyteller and wrote several short stories. The 1970s blaxploitation era films also inspired her. She received her diploma from McKinley High School in 1979 and her B.F.A. degree from New York University in 1984.

Carpenter's career began in 1990 when she became the script supervisor on Spike Lee's "Jungle Fever." She has worked on most of his films since then including "Malcolm X" in 1992 and "Inside Man" in 2005. As a filmmaker she has written and directed several short films including "The Assistant" and "Since Lisa," which won several awards including Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame and the Black American Cinema Society Awards. Her films were selected to appear on BET Jazz's "The Best Shorts." Carpenter's debut feature film, "Kali's Vibe," won the Jury Award and the Audience Award for Best Feature in 2002 at the Denver Pan African Film Festival. It was also nominated for the first annual Gordon Parks Award and won the Martha's Flavor Fest Screenplay Competition.

Carpenter has received grants from the Eastman Fund as well as the New York State Council for the Arts. She has appeared as a panelist on the Black Filmmakers in the Director's Chair Africana.com Roundtable. She also teaches several seminars on directing actors, screenwriting and script supervision. In 2004, she won the Oregon Writers Colony fiction award for her short story, "Ashes." Carpenter currently resides in Brooklyn, New York.

Shari Carpenter was interviewed by "The HistoryMakers" on January 31, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Shari Carpenter was conducted by Shawn Wilson on January 31, 2007, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 5 Betacam SP videocassettes. Filmmaker Shari Carpenter (1961 -) was one of the first African American script supervisors to join the film union Local 161.

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:

Shari Carpenter

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Shari Carpenter--Interviews

African American motion picture producers and directors--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers

EntertainmentMakers

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 Shari Carpenter, January 31, 2007. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 8/11/2011 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, January 31, 2007

Video Oral History Interview with Shari Carpenter, Section A2007_037_001_001, TRT: 0:29:38
2007/01/31

Shari Carpenter begins the interview by discussing some of her childhood memories. She remembers her father, Horace Gentins Carpenter, influencing her decision to choose film as a career. Carpenter remembers the racism she experienced at Jessie La Salle Elementary School in Washington, D.C. , where she fell victim to the brown bag test and good hair/bad hair conversations. She then describes her mother as being a strong, steadfast woman who always wanted to be a writer—a trait she and Carpenter share.

African American families--Washington (D.C.).

Social life and customs--Washington (D.C.).

African American elementary school students--Washington (D.C)

Racism--United States--Washington (D.C.)

African Americans--Social life and customs.

Video Oral History Interview with Shari Carpenter, Section A2007_037_001_002, TRT: 0:29:36
2007/01/31

Shari Carpenter shares some memories about her father Horace Gentins Carpenter. Horace worked two jobs, one as a drafter for the government, and the other as an artist. Carpenter remembers being ten years old and first experiencing racism. Carpenter's first connection with a white person was with her sixth grade teacher, Kathy O'Rourke. This relationship made her become aware she was an African American. Carpenter shares what influenced her writing as a child; poetry written by Nikki Giovanni and a book of poetry called, "Poems" by Callie. Carpenter recalls being a child who was influenced by blackploitation films and the movie, "Cornbread, Earl and Me." She recalls being one of only two African American students at New York University (NYU). She was uncomfortable with the lack of diversity at New York University until she discovered the Black Student Union on campus.

African American fathers--Attitudes.

Racism--African American children

Interracial friendship--Washington(D.C.)

New York University--African American students.

Video Oral History Interview with Shari Carpenter, Section A2007_037_001_003, TRT: 0:29:59
2007/01/31

Shari Carpenter recalls some of her classmates from New York University (NYU). She took a theater class with John Leguizamo and met Sam Christian and Keith Allen while performing in the theater department. Carpenter recalls taking creative writing classes in 1984 at the Frederick Douglass Center in New York, New York. Carpenter describes meeting Spike Lee in 1986 after seeing his film, "She's Got to Have it." She eventually came to work for Spike Lee after she wrote him a fan letter praising his films and requesting a position as a production assistant. Within a month of sending the letter Carpenter was working as a production assistant on a music video with Lee. Around this time, Carpenter began to study film at The New School, a university in New York City.

New York University--Students

New York (City). Frederick Douglass Creative Arts Center--African American students

Lee, Spike

She's gotta have it (Motion picture)

Video recording--production and direction.

Video Oral History Interview with Shari Carpenter, Section A2007_037_001_004, TRT: 0:29:34
2007/01/31

Shari Carpenter describes her time as an intern to the script supervisor on the film, "Mo' Better Blues." She was groomed to be one of the first black script supervisors to join the Local 161 film union. Carpenter first paid position as an assistant script supervisor was for the film, "New Jack City." She then discusses the lack of black script supervisors in the film industry. For example, when

Carpenter joined the Local 161, union there was only one other black script supervisor on the East Coast, Renoir Derrit. Carpenter analyzes the images of African Americans in film, particularly in the film, "New Jack City." In 1992, Carpenter began to work on her second film, "Since Lisa." Carpenter describes her work on "Jungle Fever," "Malcolm X," and a film she wrote "Callies Vibe."

Mo' better blues (Motion picture)--Employee

Trade union--New York--Film

African Americans in motion pictures

New Jack City (Motion picture)

Video Oral History Interview with Shari Carpenter, Section A2007_037_001_005, TRT: 0:24:22
2007/01/31

Shari Carpenter discusses the community of African American female directors in New York City. She describes the gender disparity between the director opportunities available for African American men versus opportunities available for African American women. Carpenter believes that the current method of film distribution makes it difficult for unknown directors to get films into distribution. She describes two of her mentors, Jim McKay and Sara Green, who are both Caucasian. Carpenter met McKay and Green through a fellowship with the Independent Feature Project. Carpenter discusses African American filmmakers, and the lack of diversity in movie content. She remembers attempting to cast an African American actress aged sixty or older and was unable to find one, due to a lack of actresses that had these characteristics.

African American women directors--Brooklyn--New York

Motion picture industry--Racism.

Motion pictures--Distribution.

African Americans in motion pictures.