

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Gail A. Hansberry

PERSON

Hansberry, Gail

Alternative Names: Gail A. Hansberry; Gail A. Hansberry

Life Dates: September 4, 1939-

Place of Birth: Washington, District of Columbia, USA

Residence: Washington, District of Columbia

Occupations: Nonprofit Chief Executive;

Biographical Note

Contractor and Graphic Artist/Photographer, Gail A. Hansberry was born in Washington, D.C. on September 4, 1939. Her mother, Myrtle Kelso Hansberry, taught French in a junior high school. Her father, William Leo Hansberry was a pioneer in the study of Ancient African History and taught at Howard University in Washington D.C. from 1922–1959. Hansberry attended public schools and during the 10th grade she lived in Cairo, Egypt, where her father was a Fulbright Research Scholar.

In 1960, Hansberry received her B.A. degree in Art from Howard University. In 1962 she received her M.A. degree in Art History from Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts, where she also took Leonard Baskin's graphics courses and made a book of etchings by hand entitled *Insects* (1962); a later enlarged version was entitled *Insects and Haiku* (1970).

In 1962-63 Hansberry worked in the Publications Office of the National Gallery of Art and taught art at Taft Junior High School in Washington, D.C. From 1963–1966 she was an instructor of Art History at North Carolina College (now North Carolina Central University) in Durham, N.C. In 1966, Hansberry moved to New York and was a researcher at Time Life Books from 1967-1976. Then, through 1979, she was a freelance editorial researcher and photographer in NY.

Hansberry returned to Washington, D.C. in 1980 and for about twenty eight years was an English Language Officer (ELO), contracted by the U.S. Department of State.

Organizations to which Hansberry has belonged include BPIA (International Association of Black Professional in International Affairs); AKA (Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority); (NCIV) National Council for International Visitors, and WBG (Washington

Biography Group). From 1990 -1992 Hansberry served as executive director of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH).

Hansberry's prints and hand-made books are in private collections and at Smith College, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City and the Library of Congress. Hansberry did photographic studies of the George Washington Bridge in New York and the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. Two photographs of her study of the Brooklyn Bridge were included in its 1983 Centennial Exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum ("The Great East River Bridge 1883-1983".) Her photography is also included in the 2009 Colors of Life, published by The Exposure Group African American Photographers Association, Inc. of which she is a member. In addition, a transcript of a video interview with Hansberry was published in Artist and Influence, Vol. XXIX, 2010, in the Hatch-Billops Collection Inc, Archives of African American Cultural History.

Gail A. Hansberry was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on February 9, 2007.

Related Entries

McKinley Technology High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Mott Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Slowe Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Benjamin Banneker Academic High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Benjamin Banneker Academic High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Howard University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Smith College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

North Carolina College at Durham [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Teacher

North Carolina Central University [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1963 to 1966]

Professor

Time Warner, Inc. [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1967 to 1976]

Researcher

Taft Elementary School [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1976 to 1985]

Teacher

United States Department of State [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1980 to ?]

Escort officer/English language officer

International Association of Black Professionals in International Affairs [MEMBEROf]
[from ? to ?]

Board Member

Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) [MEMBEROf]
[from 1990 to ?]

National President