

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

PERSON

Hansberry, Gail 1939-

**Alternative Names:** Hansberry, Gail 1939-

**Life Dates:** September 4, 1939-

**Place of Birth:** Washington, District of Columbia

**Residence:** Washington, District of Columbia

**Occupations:** Federal Government Official; Photographer

## Biographical Note

Federal government official and photographer Gail Adelle Hansberry was born on September 4, 1939. Her mother, Myrtle Kelso Hansberry, was a French major and social worker. Her father, William Leo Hansberry, pioneered African Studies at Howard University and founded the African-American Institute. Playwright Lorraine Hansberry was her first cousin. Hansberry attended Mott Elementary School, Slowe Elementary School and Benjamin Banneker Junior High School. In 1954, her family accompanied her father to Egypt on a Fulbright Fellowship. There, in Egypt, Hansberry attended Manor House English School. She graduated from McKinley Technical High School's first integrated class in 1956. At Howard University, she enjoyed classes from Dorothy Porter, Merz Tate and Arthur Davis. Graduating cum laude in 1960 with her B.A. degree in art and art history, Hansberry earned her M.A. degree in art history and graphics from Smith College in 1962. She had postgraduate education at Howard University in 1962 and 1963 and taught art at Taft Junior High School.

From 1963 to 1966, Hansberry taught art and art history at North Carolina Central University and studied book making in New York City. In 1967, she joined Time Warner's Book Division researching texts and photos. As an independent editorial researcher and photographic consultant from 1976 to 1985, Hansberry's clientele included McMillan, "Black Enterprise" magazine, American Visions, "People," "Playboy," R.R. Bowker, Boone and Young, McGraw-Hill, James E. Hinton Enterprises, American Can Company, the United Methodist Church and Blackside, Inc. In 1980, Hansberry joined the United States Department of State as an escort officer/English language officer.

Active in the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), Hansberry served as national president from 1990 to 1992. She is

board member of the International Association of Black Professionals in International Affairs and Crystal City Nursing Center. Her photographs have been exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum, Intuitive Gallery, Rockefeller Center, Fashion Institute of Technology, American Museum of Natural History and Diana Gallery. Permanent collections of her work are housed at IBM, Smith College, the Library of Congress, the Schomburg Center for Black Research, Harvard University and Boston University.

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

## Related Entries

**Hansberry, Elden Hayes** [GRANDCHILDOf]  
Grandfather (P)

**Hansberry, Pauline (Bailey) Hansberry** [GRANDCHILDOf]  
Grandmother (P)

**Hansberry, Myrtle Kay** [SIBLINGOf]  
Sister

**Hansberry, William Leo** [CHILDOf]  
Father

**Hansberry, Carl Augustus** []  
Uncle (P)

**Hansberry, Lorraine** [COUSINOf]  
Cousin

**Hansberry, Myrtle Kelso** [CHILDOf]  
Mother

**McKinley Technical Senior High School** [STUDENTOf]  
[from ? to 1956]

**Mott Elementary School** [STUDENTOf]  
[from ? to 1956]

**Slowe Elementary School** [STUDENTOf]  
[from ? to ?]

**Benjamin Banneker Junior High School** [STUDENTOf]  
[from ? to ?]

**Benjamin Banneker Academic High School** [STUDENTOf]  
[from ? to ?]

**North Carolina Central University** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1963 to 1966]

Professor

**Time Warner** [EMPLOYEEOf]  
[from 1967 to 1976]

**Researcher**

**Independent Editorial Researcher and Photographic Consultant**

[EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1976 to 1985]

**United States Department of State** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1980 to ?]

**Escort officer/English language officer**

**International Association of Black Professionals in International Affairs**

[MEMBEROF]

**Board Member**

**Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH)**

[MEMBEROF]

**National President**