

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Gloria Burgess

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Burgess, Gloria, 1953-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Burgess,
<b>Dates:</b>	June 3, 2008 and October 26, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007 and 2008
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:37:17).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Arts administrator Gloria Burgess (1953 - ) founded Jazz, Inc., an executive coaching and consulting organization. She is also the author of, "Hold Fast to Dreams: Pass It On!" Burgess was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 3, 2008 and October 26, 2007, in Edmonds, Washington. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_306
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Arts administrator Gloria Jean Burgess was born on May 23, 1953 in Oxford, Mississippi. Her father, Earnest McEwen, Jr. received a college education thanks to funding from Nobel laureate author William Faulkner, on the condition that his gift be passed on to others, which McEwen did for Gloria and his other four daughters. Burgess grew up in Detroit, where she attended Ralph Bunche Elementary School, and Ann Arbor, where she attended Northside Elementary School, Forsythe Junior High School and graduated from Huron High School. Burgess attended the University of Michigan, studying poetry with Robert Hayden and drama. She earned her B.G.S. degree in education, anthropology, English and

speech communication in 1975.

Burgess obtained her M.A. degree in speech communication and theater from the University of Michigan in 1977, earning notoriety as a Distinguished Fellow and Scholar in Direction and Performance. She attended the University of Southern California (USC) in the late 1970s, obtaining her Ph.D. in performance studies. Burgess continued studying, earning her M.B.A. degree from USC in 1986 in organizational behavior and design and information systems.

In 1988, Burgess was appointed assistant professor at the University of Washington College of Engineering, teaching leadership, management, cross cultural studies, and creativity to engineering students. In 1991, Burgess became director of multimedia development for Aldus Corporation, the organization responsible for PageMaker software. In 1994, Burgess founded Jazz, Inc., an executive coaching and consulting organization. She also founded The Lift Every Voice Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to leadership development for underserved, underrepresented youth. Burgess continued studying during this time, and in 1995 earned her M.A. degree in applied behavioral science from Bastyr University. Upon graduating, she became graduate faculty and program lead for their graduate program in leadership and applied behavioral science.

Burgess continued studying poetry as well, becoming a Fellow in the new Cave Canem organization for African American poets and writers in 1996. She became a consultant for Bastyr University's Leadership Institute the following year, consulting for faculty, undergraduate and graduate programs. Burgess spent 1997 through 1999 as a consultant for Boeing Corporation, and in 1998 was appointed to Leadership Tomorrow's Core Faculty. That same year, she published her first book of poetry, entitled *Journey of the Rose*. Despite all this activity, Burgess managed to remain involved in "Keepers of the Dream" with the Group Theatre Company, a celebration of African American women.

In 2000, Burgess expanded her coaching and consulting practice and became executive coach to the Dean of Libraries at the University of Washington. She also published her second book of poetry in 2001, entitled *The Open Door*, and wrote her first book for children entitled *Hold Fast to Dreams: Pass It On!*, about her father's relationship with William Faulkner.

Burgess lives with her husband, John, and daughter, Quinn in Edmonds, Washington.

Burgess was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on October 26, 2007.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Gloria Burgess was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 3, 2008 and October 26, 2007, in Edmonds, Washington, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Arts administrator Gloria Burgess (1953 - ) founded Jazz, Inc., an executive coaching and consulting organization. She is also the author of, "Hold Fast to Dreams: Pass It On!"

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## 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Burgess, Gloria, 1953-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews

Burgess, Gloria, 1953---Interviews

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## **Organizations:**

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## **Occupations:**

Arts Administrator

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

ArtMakers

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## **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 Gloria Burgess, June 3, 2008 and October 26, 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 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Burgess, Section A2007\_306\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:00 2008/06/03

Gloria Burgess was born on May 23, 1953 in Oxford, Mississippi. Her mother, Mildred Blackmon McEwen, was born in 1931 in Abbeville, Mississippi. Her family worked as sharecroppers on the Douglas Plantation in unincorporated Abbeville. Burgess' maternal great-great grandfather had been enslaved and fled Oklahoma for Mississippi. Burgess' paternal family is descendant of the McEwen plantation in Mississippi. Her father, Earnest McEwen, was born in 1931 in Oxford. He worked as a custodian at the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) and attended Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College in Lorman, Mississippi. McEwen developed a relationship with author William Faulkner while employed at Ole Miss. Faulkner, in turn, became his benefactor and paid for McEwen to attend Alcorn in 1953. In his senior year, McEwen was elected student body president, however, he

was expelled three months prior to graduation for his participation in a walkout in protest.

Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Burgess, Section A2007\_306\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:20 2008/06/03

Gloria Burgess's father, Earnest McEwen, was expelled from Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College in Lorman, Mississippi in 1957. McEwen led a walkout in protest of a black professor's improper use of student photographs to support his biased opinion on race. The NAACP supported McEwen by funding his studies in building and construction at Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio. He earned his B.A. degree and sent for his family shortly after. The family migrated to Detroit, Michigan, however, McEwen could not find work as an architect and supported the family as a janitor and blood bank technician. Burgess attended Ralph Bunche Elementary School, which had been racially integrated. The family moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan when she was in the fifth grade, she experienced difficulty transitioning into a predominantly white city and school system. Burgess attended Northside Elementary School and Forsythe Junior High School in Ann Arbor.

Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Burgess, Section A2007\_306\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:30 2008/06/03

Gloria Burgess talks about the negligence of black history in Ann Arbor, Michigan's public school system. Burgess received little education in black history aside from an introduction to Langston Hughes in the sixth grade. As a child, Burgess' interests were in literature, music, and public speaking—her father maintained a relationship with celebrated writer William Faulkner. She attended Huron High School where poet Gwendolyn Brooks had been invited to speak. Burgess describes the event as “life-changing,” and talks about the onset of the Civil Rights Movement and wearing her hair natural. She also addresses the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968 and the deaths of President John Kennedy and Senator Robert Kennedy. Burgess earned her high school diploma in 1971 and attended the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. She declared five majors and studied under Robert Hayden, the first African American

U.S. Poet Laureate, and choral director Dr. Eva Jessye.

Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Burgess, Section  
A2007\_306\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:00 2008/06/03

Gloria Burgess studied under choral director Dr. Eva Jessye as an undergraduate student at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Burgess talks about Jessye's legacy and her work with lyricist Ira Gershwin and composer George Gershwin on 'Porgy and Bess.' Burgess married her high school sweetheart in 1975 and earned an M.A. degree in Performance Studies from the University of Michigan in 1977. She received a Ph.D. degree from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, California in 1980 and completed her dissertation on the performance of ballads. However, Burgess transitioned from academia into business and technology sectors. She worked at Honeywell as a technical writer after the completion of her doctoral studies. In 1986, she earned an M.B.A. degree and was appointed assistant professor in the College of Engineering at the University of Washington in 1988. She left academia for the Aldus Corporation, a software company in Seattle, as its director of multimedia in 1991.

Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Burgess, Section  
A2007\_306\_001\_005, TRT: 0:30:30 2008/06/03

Gloria Burgess earned her third M.A. degree from Bastyr University in leadership development and consulting in 1995. The software company she had worked for previously, Aldus Corporation, merged with Adobe and Burgess opted to establish her own consulting company, Jazz, Incorporated. She describes common issues and problems addressed by the company and explains her management and consulting style. Burgess began publishing poetry in the late 1990s and is a Cave Canem fellow. She talks about the legacy of Cave Canem—a cultivating community for black poets—her books, and the significance of the Middle Passage to her work and the work of other poets. Burgess talks about her family, her hopes and concerns for the African American community, and her plans for the future. She considers her life, legacy, and how she would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Burgess, Section  
A2007\_306\_001\_006, TRT: 0:04:28 2008/06/03

Gloria Burgess narrates her photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Burgess, Section  
A2007\_306\_002\_007, TRT: 0:05:29 2007/10/26

Gloria Burgess narrates her photographs.