

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ghalib Ghallab

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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>	Ghallab, Ghalib, 1950-2018
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Ghalib Ghallab,
<b>Dates:</b>	November 3, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:41:26).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Jazz pianist Ghalib Ghallab (1950 - 2018 ) formed the Ghalib Ghallab Experience, a jazz band that performed in Las Vegas, Nevada at such venues as Caesar's Palace. Ghallab recorded many albums including Milestone in My Life. Ghallab was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 3, 2007, in Las Vegas, Nevada. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_320
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Jazz pianist Ghalib Ghallab was born in Chicago, Illinois to Juanita and Kay Thomas. Ghallab attended Harlan High School on Chicago's south side, playing tuba in the marching band and listening to such jazz stars as Ramsey Lewis and George Shearing. In 1968, Ghallab graduated from high school and attended the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago, Illinois, where he took lessons from the world-renowned pianist Willie Pickens.

After a period in the United States military, Ghallab relocated to San Francisco,

California, studying music at Napa Junior College and San Francisco State University. He also became involved in the local music scene, performing with such luminaries as McCoy Tyner and Ahmad Jamal and spending hours listening to jazz at the Keystone Korner Club. In 1980, Ghallab released his first record, an LP entitled *Morning Sunrise*, which explored the sounds of jazz fusion. In 1985, Ghallab released *Milestone in My Life*, showcasing the influence of R&B in his work. The following year, he married Toya Ghallab, and soon returned to Chicago. Ghallab spent much of the rest of the 1980s in Chicago, performing in The Back Room , a local jazz club, alongside artists Paul Taylor and Daryl Jones.

Ghallab performed in Las Vegas for the first time in 1989, drawing audiences that included Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and James Brown and performing at a multitude of venues, including the Jazz Underground and Aladdin Hotel. He eventually moved to Las Vegas, forming the Ghalib Ghallab Experience alongside his middle son, Jihad Ghallab, a drummer, and bass player Blaise Sison. The group performs throughout Las Vegas, in such venues as Caesar's Palace. Ghallab lives in Las Vegas and has three children, Ghalib II, Jihad, and Khalid.

Ghallab passed away on June 12, 2018.

Ghalib Ghallab was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on November 3, 2007.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Ghalib Ghallab was conducted by Jacques Lesure on November 3, 2007, in Las Vegas, Nevada, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Jazz pianist Ghalib Ghallab (1950 - 2018 ) formed the Ghalib Ghallab Experience, a jazz band that performed in Las Vegas, Nevada at such venues as Caesar's Palace. Ghallab recorded many albums including *Milestone in My Life*.

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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:**

Ghallab, Ghalib, 1950-2018

Lesure, Jacques (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews

Ghallab, Ghalib, 1950-2018--Interviews

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African American jazz musicians--Interviews

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African American pianists--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:**

Jazz Pianist

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

MusicMakers

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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 Ghalib Ghallab, November 3, 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 Ghalib Ghallab, Section  
A2007\_320\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:48 2007/11/03

Ghalib Ghallab talks about his family and childhood in Chicago, Illinois. Ghallab was born on July 25, 1950, in Chicago. His mother, Juanita Elizabeth Thomas, was born in St. Louis, Missouri and grew up in Chicago. Ghallab recalls that his mother shielded him and his siblings from negativity as they grew up. He describes his maternal family history, including an ancestor called Frank French, whose father owned a plantation and spinet piano manufacturing company in Louisiana. He also talks about his maternal grandmother and step-grandfather, Mary and Louis Henry. Ghallab's mother worked at the Board of Trade, the Board of Education, and Cook County hospital as an administrator. Ghallab's stepfather, Kay Thomas, III was born in Detroit, Michigan and grew up in Chicago. He worked as a railroad switchman and was a jazz aficionado. Ghallab also talks about his childhood on the diverse Near West Side of Chicago, where he attended Medill Elementary School before moving to the South Side as an eleven year-old.

African American families--Illinois--Chicago.  
West Side (Chicago, Ill.).

Neighborhoods--Illinois--Chicago--History--20th century.  
Chicago (Ill.)--Social conditions--20th century.

Video Oral History Interview with Ghalib Ghallab, Section  
A2007\_320\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:09 2007/11/03

Ghalib Ghallab talks about his siblings, his childhood churches, and coming of age in Chicago, Illinois and Detroit, Michigan. As children, Ghallab and his siblings attended Lutheran churches across Chicago. Ghallab

reflects on having been a devout Christian as a child. Ghallab attended Harlan High School on Chicago's South Side where he was a lifeguard and played basketball and baseball. He also played the tuba in his high school's varsity marching band. His choir teacher was HistoryMaker Lena McLin. Ghallab describes high school courtship. Through his stepfather, who exposed him to various musical genres, Ghallab discovered his affinity for jazz. Neighborhood gangs in Chicago led Ghallab to move to Detroit to live with his biological father. Ghallab describes his time in Detroit, where he learned to be "streetwise," as well as his 1966 return to Chicago. After returning, Ghallab dropped out of high school and enlisted in the U.S. Air Force, where he began to play piano seriously.

African American families--Illinois--Chicago.

Gangs--Illinois--Chicago.

African American youth--Illinois--Chicago--Social conditions.

Video Oral History Interview with Ghalib Ghallab, Section  
A2007\_320\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:11 2007/11/03

Ghalib Ghallab talks about his teenage years during which he worked as a clerk at Carson Pirie Scott, a department store in Chicago, Illinois. He also bought a Farfisa organ and began performing with various jazz bands. He reflects upon the political climate of the 1960s and picketing against housing injustice with the Contract Buyers League. In 1968, Ghallab joined the U.S. Air Force. After his service, he returned to Chicago and continued to work at Carson Pirie Scott while playing music. He met jazz artists such as Charles Earland and Lonnie Smith. After Ghallab had a son with his girlfriend, Elaine Fraser, the two moved to California where they were married. In Napa, California, Ghallab enrolled at Napa Junior College, where he and a friend started a black student union. After his marriage ended, he moved out, bought a piano, and began to focus on music once again. In 1973, Ghallab met jazz pianist Ahmad Jamal in San Francisco. He recounts a story the pianist told him about a jackrabbit and hawk.

Chicago (Ill.)--History.

Contract Buyers League.

United States. Air Force--African Americans.

Jamal, Ahmad, 1930-.

Video Oral History Interview with Ghalib Ghallab, Section  
A2007\_320\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:57 2007/11/03

Ghalib Ghallab recalls a story about a jackrabbit and a hawk that jazz pianist Ahmad Jamal told him when they met in the early 1970s in San Francisco, California. When Ghallab returned to Vallejo, California shortly thereafter, he came to understand what the story meant metaphorically. Ghallab talks about joining the Nation of Islam, living in a Fruit of Islam house, and selling the newspaper Muhammad Speaks. In Vallejo, Ghallab continued to play music, forming a jazz band and playing in different venues. In 1976, he left the avant-garde jazz of Vallejo and returned to Chicago, Illinois where he taught music at Saint Eulalia School. He also played in jazz clubs with people such as Darryl "The Munch" Jones, who was fourteen at the time, and Larry Campbell. He talks about his name change. Ghallab talks about studying under jazz pianist Willie Pickens, the jazz scene in Chicago and the changes in the genre. Ghallab played in the Bulls Night Club in Chicago in the 1980s where he sang with Tony Bennett.

Jamal, Ahmad, 1930-.

African American jazz musicians.

Jazz musicians--Illinois--Chicago.

Names, Personal--Study and teaching.

Video Oral History Interview with Ghalib Ghallab, Section  
A2007\_320\_001\_005, TRT: 0:26:25 2007/11/03

Ghalib Ghallab talks about his wife, Toya Ghallab, who he met in a jazz club in Chicago in 1980. At the time of the interview, she worked in finance. Together they have three sons. She also helped raise his oldest son from his first marriage, Ghalib Ghallab, II. Ghallab spent time performing in Italy, France, and Monaco, before deciding to relocate to Las Vegas without his family. He recalls advice from HistoryMaker Sonny Turner about the entertainment industry. Ghallab's family eventually joined

him in Las Vegas where he worked in casinos and restaurants around the city, including Caesars Palace, Harrah's, Boulder Station, MGM and Tres Jazz. Ghallab began to receive piano endorsements and the money he made as a musician allowed him to make donations to his religious community. Ghallab talks about his son, Jihad, who plays drums with him in his band. Ghallab also reflects on the current state of the jazz scene.

African American families--Nevada--Las Vegas.

Jazz musicians--Nevada--Las Vegas.

Music--Vocational guidance.

Islam--United States--History--20th century.

Muhammad, Warith Deen, 1933-2008.

Video Oral History Interview with Ghalib Ghallab, Section  
A2007\_320\_001\_006, TRT: 0:18:56 2007/11/03

Ghalib Ghallab reflects on his success as a musician and offers advice to people entering the entertainment industry. He talks about the difference in skillsets needed to succeed now as compared to when he began to play professionally. He reflects on his hopes for the future as an artist and in terms of travel. Ghallab talks about his hopes and concerns for the African American community. He also reflects upon his life, legacy, and how he would like to be remembered. Ghallab concludes by narrating his photographs.

Music--Vocational guidance.

Music--Philosophy and aesthetics.