



Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Marian Cullers

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Marian Cullers
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Marian Cullers,
Dates:	May 28, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	5 Betacam SP videocassettes (2:24:03).
Abstract:	Advertising executive Marian Cullers (1927-) was co-founder of Vince Cullers Advertising Agency, the first black advertising agency in America. Cullers was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 28, 2010, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_037
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Advertising executive Marian Barnett Cullers was born in 1927 in Webster Grove, Missouri. She graduated from Douglass High School in 1943 before attending Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri. She transferred to the University of Illinois at Champaign in 1945 where she graduated with her B.A. degree. In 1946, Cullers married Vince Cullers, a graduate of the Chicago Art Institute and apprentice at Kling Studios in Chicago. The two opened an advertising art studio in 1947.

Frustrated with the lack of work, the Cullers opened Vince Cullers Advertising Agency, Inc. in 1956, the first black advertising agency in the United States. While her husband was behind the art, Cullers was in charge of office administration. Their first major national client came in 1968 with the Lorillard Tobacco Company who hired the Cullers to create a Newport cigarette campaign. That same year, the agency was chosen to market the Johnson Products Company's Afro-Sheen product line. Cullers was named vice president of the agency and was a finalist for Chicago Advertising Woman of the Year. The firm was restructured in 1997 and dubbed "the oldest, newest African American ad agency." In 2002, Cullers and her husband retired leaving their son Jeffrey to head the agency.

Marian Cullers was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on May 28, 2010.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Marian Cullers was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 28, 2010, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacam SP videocassettes. Marian Cullers (1927-) was co-founder of Vince Cullers Advertising Agency, the first black advertising agency in America.

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:

Cullers, Marian

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Cullers, Marian --Interviews

African American advertising executives—Interviews

African American businesswomen—Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Vince Cullers Advertising Agency

HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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 Marian Cullers, May 28, 2010. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 8/9/2011 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, May 28, 2010

Video Oral History Interview with Marian Cullers, Section A2010_037_001_001, TRT: 0:28:15
2010/05/28

Marian Cullers lists her favorites and describes her occupational history and family background. She was born in Urbana, Illinois, to Edna Ruth Glover and Elliott James Barnett. Edna Glover was born around 1909 in Monticello, Georgia, but was raised in Champaign, Illinois. Glover's maternal grandfather was a sharecropper in Georgia and a brakeman for the Illinois Central Railroad. Cullers' father, Elliott James Barnett, was born in Mattoon, Illinois. Barnett attended the University of Illinois, and graduated with a degree in journalism. Unable to find work in Chicago, Illinois or New York, New York, Barnett began waiting tables, and also worked on the railroad, as a teacher at Chanute Field Air Force Base in Rantoul, Illinois with the Tuskegee Airmen and as a

journalism professor at Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri. Cullers parents' met in high school in Champaign, Illinois and separated when she was around sixteen years old.

African American families--Illinois.

African Americans--Employment.

Video Oral History Interview with Marian Cullers, Section A2010_037_001_002, TRT: 0:36:18
2010/05/28

Marian Cullers describes her mother's work as a cook and a caterer. She also supported Cullers' father while he attended school. Later, Glover remarried and moved to Chicago, Illinois to help Cullers raise her son. Cullers' earliest childhood memory is of taking dance and speech lessons. When she was four years old, she went to live with her paternal aunt and uncle in Webster Groves, Missouri, until she graduated from high school. Cullers describes her the sights, sounds, and smells of her childhood and her education. In Webster Groves, Missouri, Cullers attended the all-black, combined Douglass Elementary and High School. Cullers discusses segregation in Webster Groves's schools. Douglass continued segregation until 1957, when it was closed. Cullers talks about Lincoln University, in Jefferson City, Missouri and meeting her husband Vince, who she married on March 1, 1946.

African American women--Employment.

Segregation in education--Missouri.

African Americans--Employment.

African American families--Illinois.

African American families--Missouri.

Video Oral History Interview with Marian Cullers, Section A2010_037_001_003, TRT: 0:27:03
2010/05/28

Marian Cullers discusses the difficulties for African Americans in advertising. Cullers' husband Vince attended the Art Institute of Chicago and the University of Chicago, and worked at Kling Studios in Chicago. Vince later went to work for Ebony Magazine as an art director and opened Vince Cullers Advertising's first office. Cullers talks about graphic designer LeRoy Winbush, and the differences between advertisers and graphic designers. Vince Cullers Advertising's first big account was with Johnson Products's Afro Sheen in 1958. She discusses the various claims to the title of first African American advertising agency. The agency's first contracts were local accounts. They later produced a series on black inventors sponsored by Johnson Products in 1968. Cullers describes the various components of creating and producing a commercial and Lu's Notebook, a Chicago radio program sponsored by Illinois Bell and featuring African American news commentator Lu Palmer.

African Americans in advertising.

African American advertising agencies--History.

Cullers, Vince.

Palmer, Lu.

Video Oral History Interview with Marian Cullers, Section A2010_037_001_004, TRT: 0:29:15
2010/05/28

Marian Cullers describes her various job roles at Vince Cullers Advertising, and reflects on important company milestones. Vince Cullers was honored posthumously as a pioneer in advertising by the American Association of Advertising Agencies. Vince Cullers Advertising eventually dissolved, and their son Jeffrey runs a spin-off of the business, the Vince Cullers Group.

Cullers describes the legacy of Vince Cullers Advertising and talks about his accomplishments, which were described in, "The Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertising and Its Creators," by Stephen Fox. Vince and Marian Cullers often volunteered with local organizations like the Kuumba Theatre Company and created opportunities for African Americans to enter the modeling industry. She discusses her hopes for the African American community, and states that she hopes their children will continue their legacy of service.

African Americans in advertising.

African American advertising agencies.

Kuumba Theatre Company.

Video Oral History Interview with Marian Cullers, Section A2010_037_001_005, TRT: 0:23:12 ?

Marian Cullers and Jeff Cullers, appearing off-camera, discuss clarifying details regarding the nature of his successor business, the Vince Cullers Group. Cullers discusses the way in which she wishes to be remembered, and her late husband's perseverance.

Cullers, Vince.

African American advertising agencies.