

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Maya Angelou

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Angelou, Maya
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Maya Angelou,
Dates:	August 31, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	2 uncompressed MOV digital video files (0:58:29).
Abstract:	Poet Maya Angelou (1928 - 2014) was the author of the famed autobiography <i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</i> , and the Reynolds Professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Angelou was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 31, 2010, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_109
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Poet, author, and professor Maya Angelou was born as Marguerite Johnson on April 4, 1928 in St. Louis, Missouri, to Bailey and Vivian Baxter Johnson. Angelou's older brother, Bailey Jr., nicknamed her "Maya" when they were children. When Angelou was three years old, her parents divorced and sent her and her brother to live with their grandmother in the harshly segregated Stamps, Arkansas. Angelou and her brother moved back and forth between Stamps and St. Louis throughout their formative years. During World War II, Angelou attended George Washington High School and San Francisco's Labor School, dropping out for a short while to work as the first Black female streetcar conductor in San Francisco, but eventually graduating at the age of seventeen. Three weeks after her graduation, she gave birth to her only son.

Around 1950, Angelou, then a calypso dancer, changed her name from Marguerite Johnson to the more theatrical Maya Angelou. From 1954 to 1955, Angelou toured Europe with a production of the opera *Porgy and Bess*, and three years later, she moved to New York City in order to concentrate on her writing career. Around the same time, she served as the Northern Coordinator for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) under Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In 1961, Angelou moved to Cairo, where she wrote for the weekly newspaper, "The Arab Observer", then to Ghana, where she taught at the University of Ghana's School of Music and Drama and worked as a feature editor for "The African Review". Angelou returned to the United States in 1964 to help Malcolm X build the Organization of African American Unity. Unfortunately, when Malcolm died, so too did the organization.

In 1970, Angelou published her famed autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, for which she received a National Book Award nomination. This autobiography was followed by five other volumes, released in 1974, 1976, 1981, 1986, and 2002. Angelou's first volume of poetry, "Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water 'Fore I Diiie," was published in 1971, and nominated for the Pulitzer Prize the next year. In 1981, Angelou returned to the South, where she became the Reynolds Professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. In 1993, she recited her poem "On the Pulse of Morning" at the inauguration of President Bill

Clinton.

The recipient of a Tony Award nomination for her role in the 1973 Broadway play *Look Away*, Angelou was granted three Grammy Awards for her spoken word albums and an Emmy for her supporting role in the television miniseries "Roots." In 1998, Angelou was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame. She was the recipient of the National Medal of Arts in 2000 and the Lincoln Medal in 2008. Later in life, Angelou divided her time between Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and Harlem, New York. She had one son, two grandsons, and two great-grandchildren.

Maya Angelou passed away on May 28, 2014 at the age of 86.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Maya Angelou was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on August 31, 2010, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and was recorded on 2 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Poet Maya Angelou (1928 - 2014) was the author of the famed autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, and the Reynolds Professor of American Studies at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

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:

Angelou, Maya

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Angelou, Maya--Interviews

African American women authors--Interviews.

African American poets--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Poet

HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers

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 Maya Angelou, August 31, 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 5/30/2023 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

Video Oral History Interview with Maya Angelou, Section A2010_109_001_001, TRT: 0:31:12 ?

Maya Angelou slates the interview and lists her favorites. She describes her paternal grandmother, who was the daughter of a former slave and the only African American business owner in Stamps, Arkansas. Angelou describes her earliest childhood memory, her close relationship with her brother Bailey and the sights, sounds and smells of her childhood. She also shares songs she remembers from her childhood. She describes the rape she experienced as a child, being questioned regarding the incident, and the threats made against her brother's life, should she ever tell. The perpetrator was jailed for one day and released. Three days later, he was found dead, kicked to death; as a result, she stopped speaking. Angelou discusses her relationship with Mrs. Flowers, a neighbor who convinced her to speak after six years of silence. Angelou talks about her six years of silence, and describes her development during that period. African American families--Arkansas.

Brothers and sisters--Family relationships.

Sexually abused children--Psychological aspects.

Angelou, Maya.

Video Oral History Interview with Maya Angelou, Section A2010_109_001_002, TRT: 0:27:17 ?

Maya Angelou discusses her recording career. In 1957, she released her first album, Miss Calypso, followed by Calypso Heat Wave the same year. Angelou trained as a dancer, but at the age of twenty-four, she began suffering from arthritis. During her career, she danced in a production of, Porgy and Bess, singing the role of Ruby. She recalls not being regarded as a singer, but when she could no longer dance, she sang in night clubs for a living. Angelou talks about meeting Alvin Ailey in San Francisco, and joining the Harlem Writers Guild. Founder John Oliver Killens invited Angelou to join the Guild in New York, where she met James Baldwin, Paule Marshall, Sarah Wright, and John Clarke. She describes her friendship with James Baldwin, stating that he reminded her of her brother Bailey. Angelou discusses her mentor relationship with Oprah Winfrey, and the legacy she wishes to leave.

Harlem Writers Guild Inc.

Killens, John Oliver, 1916-1987

Gershwin, George,--1898-1937.--Porgy and Bess.

Ailey, Alvin.

Baldwin, James, 1924-1987.

Winfrey, Oprah.

Angelou, Maya.