

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Karen Hill-Scott

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Hill-Scott, Karen
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Karen Hill-Scott,
Dates:	December 16, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	8 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:45:34).
Abstract:	Educator and education consultant Karen Hill-Scott (1946 -) was the founder of Karen Hill-Scott, Inc. and the cofounder of Crystal Stairs. She served as an educational consultant for companies like NBC/ION Networks, Baby Einstein Company, Discovery Kids, Nickelodeon, Disney Channel, Jim Henson Company, and TRW. Hill-Scott was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 16, 2013, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_356
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Educator and consultant Karen Hill-Scott received her M.A. and Ed.D. degrees in education from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA). As a student, she was awarded both the Danforth and Chancellor's Fellowships. Upon graduation, Hill-Scott received the "Outstanding Graduate Student" honor from UCLA's School of Education.

Hill-Scott co-founded Crystal Stairs, one of California's largest non-profit child development agencies, served as an adjunct professor at the UCLA School of Management, and has consistently contributed to child development policy through consulting and public service. She founded and served as president of Karen Hill-Scott, Inc., where she has worked to translate theory into practical content. Hill-Scott is the chief educational consultant for NBC/ION Networks and has previously consulted for Baby Einstein Company, Discovery Kids (on NBC), Nickelodeon, the Disney Channel, and the Jim Henson Company. She was the principal consultant for the TRW (now Northrop Grumman) work-family programs, and developed the on-site child development center for the company.

Hill-Scott's publications include book chapters in the historical volume *NBC: America's Network* (2007), *The Handbook of Children's Television* (2001), *Managing Quality in Child Development Programs* (2000), and several technical reports on child care management and inter-agency collaboration. Hill-Scott was chair of the State of California School Readiness Work Group and the Universal Pre-school Task Force, where she was involved in the writing of several published reports including "The California School Readiness Master Plan" (2002), and "Ready to Learn: Universal Pre-school in California" (1999). She has also authored "The Sky's the Limit: the Los Angeles Universal Preschool Master Plan."

Hill-Scott has served as chair of the State of California School Readiness Master Plan for the State Senate Joint

Committee, co-chair of the Universal Preschool Task Force for the California Department of Education, and served on the National Pre-Kindergarten Committee for the Education Commission of the States. Hill Scott was also appointed to the State of California First 5 Commission, as well as the board of directors for the Foundation for Child Development and Crystal Stairs, Inc.

Hill-Scott has been consistently recognized for her outstanding service to the Los Angeles community. She was named the Preschool California's Hero of Month in October 2006. Hill-Scott is the recipient of the Proven Achievers Award from KJLH and the Walt Disney Company, the John Harvard Award for Community Service, the SCLC-Rosa Parks Award for Social Justice, a Woman of the Year Award from the County Commission on the Status of Women, a Woman of History Award from KCET Television, a Woman of the Year Award from the Santa Monica YWCA, an Inspirational Woman of the Year from NAWBO-LA, and the Tom Bradley Alumnus of the Year Award from UCLA.

A resident of Los Angeles, Hill-Scott is married to Dr. T.V. Scott, an ophthalmologist. They have four children, and eight grandchildren.

Karen Hill-Scott was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on December 16, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Karen Hill-Scott was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 16, 2013, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 8 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Educator and education consultant Karen Hill-Scott (1946 -) was the founder of Karen Hill-Scott, Inc. and the cofounder of Crystal Stairs. She served as an educational consultant for companies like NBC/ION Networks, Baby Einstein Company, Discovery Kids, Nickelodeon, Disney Channel, Jim Henson Company, and TRW.

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:

Hill-Scott, Karen

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Hill-Scott, Karen--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Education Consultant

Educator

HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

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 Karen Hill-Scott, December 16, 2013. 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 Karen Hill-Scott, Section A2013_356_001_001, TRT: 1:28:23 ?

Karen Hill-Scott was born on December 5, 1946 in Chicago, Illinois to Hope Morris Hill and Ernest Hill. Her maternal grandmother, Willie Morris, was a professional dancer, and appeared in minstrel shows on Broadway during the 1890s. Eventually, she married a Scotch-Irish man named Thomas Morris, with whom she raised four children in Columbia, Missouri. Hill-Scott's mother was the only one of their children who embraced her African American heritage, while her siblings chose to pass as white. At this point, Hill-Scott remembers attending her maternal aunt's funeral, where it was stated that her aunt had no living family members. Hill-Scott's mother completed her secondary education at Charles H. Sumner High School in St. Louis, Missouri, and then moved to Los Angeles, California, where she was briefly married. She also had a career as an actress, and appeared alongside Louise Beavers in the film 'Life Goes On.' After obtaining a divorce, Hill-Scott's mother moved to Chicago, where she met Hill-Scott's father.

Video Oral History Interview with Karen Hill-Scott, Section A2013_356_001_002, TRT: 2:28:47 ?

Karen Hill-Scott's paternal great-grandfather, John Hill, was born to a wealthy landowning family in North Carolina. At the start of the Civil War, he moved to Silver Creek, Mississippi, which was named after the Hill family plantation. There, Hill-Scott's great-grandfather worked as an obstetrician with his wife, midwife Adelaide Hill. Hill-Scott's paternal grandfather, Allen Hill, moved west during the land rush after the Civil War. He settled in Beggs, Oklahoma, where he and his wife worked as educators, and raised Hill-Scott's father, Ernest Hill. Her father was a carpenter prior to World War II, and became a mechanic while serving in the 761st Tank Battalion. After the war, he worked for the Ford Motor Company and Chrysler Corporation. At this point, Hill-Scott describes the emphasis on education in her father's family, which included the noted librarian Charlemae Hill Rollins. She also talks about her father's memories of liberating the Buchenwald concentration camp.

Video Oral History Interview with Karen Hill-Scott, Section A2013_356_001_003, TRT: 3:29:50 ?

Karen Hill-Scott's parents, Hope Morris Hill and Ernest Hill, met and married in Chicago, Illinois after her father returned from World War II. They moved into her paternal aunt's apartment building on 63rd Street, where Hill-Scott spent her early childhood. Her family emphasized education, and her mother planned her schooling through college from a young age. Hill-Scott's siblings, William Hill and Michelle Hill, were born when she was a toddler. In 1948, her family moved to South Central Los Angeles, California, where Hill-Scott contracted polio at four years old. She was treated at the Los Angeles County General Hospital, and recovered with no residual impairment. Hill-Scott attended the integrated Mark Twain Elementary School, where her classmates included Mexican, Japanese

and white children. Many of her African American peers were migrants from Arkansas and Louisiana. She was introduced to the concept of race during the first grade, when one of her classmates became curious about her fair skin.

Video Oral History Interview with Karen Hill-Scott, Section A2013_356_001_004, TRT: 4:28:34 ?

Karen Hill-Scott was recognized as a piano prodigy at the age of five years old. She began studying piano at the Gray Conservatory of Music in Los Angeles, California. After noticing her talents, her teachers recommended she attend the University of Southern California's Colburn School, where she trained with a Hungarian pianist. Although Hill-Scott's family were Christian Scientist, she was exposed to ecumenical Christianity while playing piano at churches throughout the city. Hill-Scott enjoyed her social studies classes at Mark Twain Elementary School, and belonged to the South Los Angeles Chapter of Jack and Jill of America, Inc. She went on to attend Centennial High School in Compton, California. During this time, she won the television game show 'Quiz Down.' After Hill-Scott graduated from high school, her mother, Hope Morris Hill, enrolled her in the music program at George Pepperdine College. She graduated early, and secured a Danforth Fellowship to attend the University of California, Los Angeles.

Video Oral History Interview with Karen Hill-Scott, Section A2013_356_001_005, TRT: 5:30:42 ?

Karen Hill-Scott enrolled at George Pepperdine College in Los Angeles, California in 1964. Her program of study focused on music, and was chosen by her mother, Hope Morris Hill. The culture at George Pepperdine College was politically conservative and highly religious, and Hill-Scott was eventually disciplined for poor attendance at chapel services. In response, her mother convinced the university to allow her to work in the registrar's office on Sundays. There, Hill-Scott discovered that the administration kept a list of African American students with poor grades. After graduating in 1967, Hill-Scott married Timothy Scott and stopped playing piano. She also secured a Danforth Fellowship to attend the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), where she earned a master's degree and Ed.D. degree. Throughout this time, Hill-Scott was active in the Civil Rights Movement. She organized the Black Graduate Students Association at UCLA, and worked with the administration to found the Afro American Studies Center.

Video Oral History Interview with Karen Hill-Scott, Section A2013_356_001_006, TRT: 6:29:10 ?

Karen Hill-Scott studied education at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) during the early 1970s. She was interested in improving the education system, and wrote her master's thesis on the educational children's television show 'Sesame Street.' Upon completing her Ed.D. degree in 1974, Hill-Scott was hired as a professor at UCLA. Ten years later, she was contacted by Phyllis Tucker Vinson Jackson, who offered her a position as an educational consultant for NBC. There, Hill-Scott helped develop children's shows like 'Alvin and The Chipmunks,' 'The Smurfs' and 'The Gary Coleman Show.' She developed a strong reputation, and the demand for her services increased after the passage of the Children's Television Act of 1990. Hill-Scott went on to provide diversity and educational consulting services for over two thousand episodes of television content. At this point in the interview, Hill-Scott talks about the poor representation of black and female characters in children's television prior to the 1990s.

Video Oral History Interview with Karen Hill-Scott, Section A2013_356_001_007, TRT: 7:28:59 ?

Karen Hill-Scott provided diversity and educational consulting services to major television programs in the 1980s and 1990s. She was initially underestimated by television writers, until finding massive success with the show 'Blue's Clues' on

Nick Jr. She went on to receive widespread acclaim for her diversity work on programs like 'The Adventures of Jimmy Neutron.' During this time, Hill-Scott continued to conduct policy and education research at the University of California, Los Angeles. With a graduate school classmate, she cofounded the non-profit organization Crystal Stairs, Inc. Named for Langston Hughes' poem, the organization focused on early education and childcare, and grew to be the largest educational non-profit in California. Hill-Scott also helped create the Nickerson Gardens SAGE Center, and coauthored the State of California's early education master plan. Additionally, she talks about the lack of educational content on public television, and the effects of twenty-four hour cartoon programming.

Video Oral History Interview with Karen Hill-Scott, Section A2013_356_001_008, TRT: 8:21:09 ?

Karen Hill-Scott talks about her family and her style of parenting. She also describes her plans for the future. Hill-Scott concludes the interview by reflecting upon her life, legacy and how she would like to be remembered.