

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Teri Agins

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Agins, Teri
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Teri Agins,
Dates:	January 16, 2014
Bulk Dates:	2014
Physical Description:	8 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:58:08).
Abstract:	Journalist Teri Agins (1953 -) was the author of <i>The End of Fashion: How Marketing Changed the Clothing Industry Forever</i> and worked as a fashion reporter for <i>The Wall Street Journal</i> for over twenty years. Agins was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 16, 2014, in Bronx, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2014_009
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Journalist Teri Agins was born on November 14, 1953 in Kansas City, Kansas. Agins graduated with her B.A. degree in English and political science from Wellesley College in 1975. She received her M.A. degree in journalism from the University of Missouri.

In the 1970s, Agins was hired as an intern at the *Kansas City Star* and the *Boston Globe*. She also worked as a writer for Fairchild Publications, now Fairchild Fashion Media, in New York City in the 1970s. Agins then moved to Brazil for five years with her former husband, and worked as a freelance writer for the *New York Times* and *Time Magazine*. In 1984, she was hired as a reporter for the *Wall Street Journal*, where she wrote a small business column. Then, in 1989, Agins was assigned to develop the fashion beat for the *Wall Street Journal*, becoming one of the reporters at the paper to cover fashion from a business perspective. She was made senior special writer in 1995. Agins retired from her post at the *Wall Street Journal* in 2009, but continued to write freelance for the newspaper, including authoring the popular fashion column “Ask Teri.” She has also written for other publications, including *Vogue*, *Town & Country*, *O: The Oprah Magazine*, and *Essence*.

In 1999, Agins published her first book, *The End of Fashion: How Marketing Changed the Clothing Industry Forever*. Her second book, published in 2014, examines the rise of fast fashion, the power of online shopping, the influence of social media and the rise of celebrity designers in the fashion and retail clothing industry.

Agins has received several awards, including the Atrium Award from the University of Georgia College of Journalism and the Atlanta Apparel Mart in 1990 and 1996; the Front Page Award from the Newswomen's Club of New York in 1991 and 2002; and the Missouri Lifestyle Journalism award in 1996 and 2000. In 2004, the Council of Fashion Designers of America awarded her with the Eugenia Sheppard Award for Excellence in Fashion Journalism.

Teri Agins was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 16, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Teri Agins was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on January 16, 2014, in Bronx, New York, and was recorded on 8 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Journalist Teri Agins (1953 -) was the author of *The End of Fashion: How Marketing Changed the Clothing Industry Forever* and worked as a fashion reporter for *The Wall Street Journal* for over twenty years.

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:

Agins, Teri

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Agins, Teri--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Journalist

Journalist

HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers|StyleMakers

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 Teri Agins, January 16, 2014. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 6/7/2022 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 Teri Agins, Section A2014_009_001_001, TRT: 1:30:01
2014/01/16

Teri Agins was born on November 14, 1953 in Kansas City, Kansas to Phyllis Jackson Agins and William Agins. Her maternal grandparents, Reverend James Jackson and Madeline Orr Jackson, were both college graduates. They lived in

Aiken, South Carolina, where Agins' mother was born in 1923. Around that time, Agins' grandfather lost his church under mysterious circumstances. The family moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and then to Kansas City, where Agins' mother grew up. She joined the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority at the University of Kansas, and became a public school teacher. Agins' father was born in 1920 in Little Rock, Arkansas, and grew up in Kansas City. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II, and met Agins' mother at the University of Kansas. He went on to work as a civil servant in the Office of Economic Opportunity. Agins' parents settled in Kansas City's Brentwood Hills community, which was built by black developers in 1955. They were active in black social clubs and the Faith Lutheran Church.

Video Oral History Interview with Teri Agins, Section A2014_009_001_002, TRT: 2:30:23
2014/01/16

Teri Agins grew up in Brentwood Hills in Kansas City, Kansas, where she began her education at Quindaro Elementary School. From an early age, she shared an interest in fashion with her older sister, P. Genie Agins. They were encouraged by their neighbor, Bette McClure Dooley, who introduced them to Vogue and Harper's Bazaar. While attending Northwest Junior High School, Agins wrote a fashion column for the school's Nor'wester newspaper. She also designed clothes with her sister and her classmate, Janice Branson. Additionally, Agins studied piano throughout her childhood, and played the organ at Faith Lutheran Church when she was a teenager. She attended Kansas City's Wyandotte High School, where she excelled academically. She was a member of the yearbook staff, the banner girls and the Spanish club. Agins and her sister also belonged to Kansas City's Jack and Jill chapter. During this time, Agins aspired to become a journalist, and was influenced by reporter Larry Whiteside of the Kansas City Kansan.

Video Oral History Interview with Teri Agins, Section A2014_009_001_003, TRT: 3:34:51
2014/01/16

Teri Agins participated in a debutante ball hosted by the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority during her teenage years in Kansas City, Kansas. She read about Wellesley College in fashion magazines, and became interested in attending. With help from her counselor at Northwest Junior High School, she secured an invitation to have tea with alumnae from the school. Agins enrolled at Wellesley College after graduating from high school in 1971. She excelled in her classes, and took part in the college social scene in Boston, Massachusetts. During the summers, she interned at The Kansas City Star and The Boston Globe. Upon earning her degree in 1975, Agins enrolled in the journalism program at the University of Missouri in Columbia, Missouri. The following year, she traveled to Peru to research the impact of Juan Velasco Alvarado's presidency on the press. Agins completed her master's degree in 1977, and went on to cover menswear and textiles for the Daily News Record in Chicago, Illinois.

Video Oral History Interview with Teri Agins, Section A2014_009_001_004, TRT: 4:30:42
2014/01/16

Teri Agins moved to Brazil in 1979 with her husband, whom she later divorced. In 1984, she returned to the United States, and secured a position at The Wall Street Journal with help from editor Michael I. Days. Although she had no background in finance, she received assistance from James Hyatt and Johnny Roberts. At The Wall Street Journal, Agins covered the airline industry from 1984 to 1987. During that time, Pan American World Airways, People Express Airlines, Eastern Air Lines and Trans World Airlines all went out of business. In 1987, Agins switched to covering the fashion retail industry. She established her

reputation as a fashion journalist by reporting on the Federal Trade Commission's investigation of the Benetton Group S.p.A. for noncompliance with franchising laws. In 1990, Agins covered designer Gordon Henderson's conflicts with his financial backers. The story was recognized by the University of Georgia's journalism school, and further strengthened her reputation.

Video Oral History Interview with Teri Agins, Section A2014_009_001_005, TRT: 5:30:42
2014/01/16

Teri Agins wrote about the fashion retail industry for The Wall Street Journal. She reported on the emergence of the casual dress code at the Alcoa Corporation around 1990, which was the starting point for her book, 'The End of Fashion: How Marketing Changed the Clothing Business Forever.' Agins also collaborated with Philip Revzin on an interview with Yves Saint Laurent about the future of his company and the fashion industry. In 1992, Agins broke the story of the accounting scandal at Leslie Fay Company, Inc., in which her source, controller Donald Kenia, revealed widespread irregularities in the firm's earnings reports. In 1994, Agins travelled to Milan, Italy to interview Serbian designer Zoran Ladicorbic about his minimalist approach to high end fashion. Subsequently, she returned to Europe to cover the competition between Gucci, Prada and LVMH to acquire independent designers. During this time, Agins developed a strong reputation among fashion industry leaders like Vogue editor Anna Wintour.

Video Oral History Interview with Teri Agins, Section A2014_009_001_006, TRT: 6:31:02
2014/01/16

Teri Agins began writing 'The End of Fashion: How Marketing Changed the Clothing Industry Forever' in 1996, after being offered a book deal with HarperCollins Publishers LLC. In 1997, Agins took leave from The Wall Street Journal to conduct research for the book. She travelled to Paris, France to study the role of the French government in the formation of the fashion industry, and to document Emanuel Ungaro's relationship with the Salvatore Ferragamo company. She then visited designer Zoran Ladicorbic in Milan, Italy, and went to Chicago, Illinois to study Marshall Field and Company's acquisition by the Target Corporation. Agins also wrote chapters on designers Isaac Mizrahi, Giorgio Armani, Donna Karan, Ralph Lauren and Tommy Hilfiger, exploring each of their roles in the fashion industry's transformation. Following the book's publication in 1999, Agins appeared on 'The Oprah Winfrey Show' and 'The View.' Her book was translated into Romanian and Japanese, and used as a textbook in college courses.

Video Oral History Interview with Teri Agins, Section A2014_009_001_007, TRT: 7:38:23
2014/01/16

Teri Agins worked closely with fashion journalist and consultant Alan Millstein during her early career. In 2004, she received the Eugenia Sheppard Media Award from the Council of Fashion Designers of America, where she shared the stage with celebrities and designers like Sarah Jessica Parker, Sean Combs, Tom Ford, Donna Karan and Reed Krakoff. In 2014, Agins published 'Hijacking The Runway: How Celebrities Are Stealing the Spotlight from Fashion Designers,' which covered the transformations in the fashion industry in the decade following the release of her first book. At this point in the interview, Agins talks about the designers she covered, including Patrick Robinson, Karl Lagerfeld, Tracy Reese, Byron Lars and Anna Wintour. She also describes her circle of fashion journalists, including Robin Givhan, Cathy Horyn, Constance White, Bernadine Morris and Marylou Luther. Agins concludes this part of the interview by reflecting upon her life and role within the field of fashion

journalism.

Video Oral History Interview with Teri Agins, Section A2014_009_001_008, TRT: 8:12:04
2014/01/16

Teri Agins describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community. She reflects upon her legacy, and concludes the interview by describing how she would like to be remembered.