

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with André De Shields

PERSON

De Shields, André, 1946-

**Alternative Names:** André De Shields; DéDé; Dré; Jelly Belly; Uncle Andy; Goatman

**Life Dates:** January 12, 1946-

**Place of Birth:** Dundalk, Maryland, USA

**Residence:** New York, NY

**Work:** New York, NY

**Occupations:** Stage Actor; Stage Director; Choreographer

## Biographical Note

Stage actor, director, and choreographer André De Shields was born on January 12, 1946 in Dundalk, Maryland to Mary Gunther and John De Shields. He was raised in Baltimore, Maryland as the ninth of eleven children. De Shields obtained his high school diploma at Baltimore City College in 1964, and earned his B.A. degree in English literature from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1970. In 1991, De Shields received his M.A. degree in African American studies from New York University's Gallatin School of Individualized Study.

De Shields began his career in 1969 at Chicago's Shubert Theatre in Tom O'Horgan's production of *Hair*, The American Tribal-Love Rock Musical. In 1971, De Shields joined the Organic Theater Company and began performing in *Wrap!* in Chicago. In 1973, De Shields left the Organic Theater Company and became an associate choreographer for Bette Midler's *Clams on the Half Shell Revue* the following year. In the late 1970s, De Shields began choreographing for *Saturday Night Live* and *Sesame Street*. He then went on to perform in many televised productions, including *Ain't Misbehavin'* (1982), *Alice in Wonderland* (1983), and *Duke Ellington, The Music Lives On* (1984). De Shields continued his work while holding professorships at New York University, Southern Methodist University, and the University of Michigan. In 2009, in honor of President Barack Obama's election, Mr. De Shields created his solo performance, *Frederick Douglass: Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*.

De Shields received numerous awards, including three Chicago Joseph Jefferson Awards and nine AUDELCO Awards. In 1982, De Shields won an Emmy for Outstanding Individual Performance for the NBC TV Special based on *Ain't*

Misbehavin'. In 2004, he received honorary doctorate of fine arts degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and from SUNY-Buffalo State. De Shields received a Village Voice OBIE Award for Sustained Excellence of Performance in 2007, and in 2009, he won the National Black Theatre Festival's Living Legend Award. De Shields received a Distinguished Achievement Award from Fox Foundation Fellowship in 2012, a Making Waves Award from Florida Atlantic University in 2014, an Award for Excellence in The Arts from the theatre school at DePaul University in 2015, and a Pioneer of the Arts Award from Riant Theatre in 2016.

André De Shields was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on September 19, 2016.

## Related Entries

**New York University Gallatin School of Individualized Study** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**MA degree**

**John Hurst Elementary School No. 120** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Diploma**

**Booker T. Washington Middle School for the Arts** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Diploma**

**Baltimore City College** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Diploma**

**Wilmington College** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**Matriculated**

**University of Wisconsin-Madison** [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

**BA degree**

**The Full Monty** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 200003 to 200209]

**Actor**

**The Wiz** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 197408 to 197708]

**Actor**

**Ain't Misbehavin** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 197712 to 198304]

**Actor**

**Morehouse College** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1985 to 1985]

**Distinguished Visiting Professor**

**University of Michigan-Ann Arbor** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1988 to 1988]

**Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.-Rosa Parks-Cesar Chavez Distinguished Visiting Professor**

**Southern Methodist University** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1989 to 1989]

**Algur H. Meadows Distinguished Visiting Professor**

**Southern Methodist University, Meadows School of the Arts** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1990 to 1990]

**Distinguished Visiting Professor**

**New York University School of Education, Health, Nursing and Arts Professions**

[EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1993 to 1993]

**Adjunct Professor**

**Gallatin School of Individualized Study** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 2000 to 2001]

**Adjunct Professor**

**Gallatin School of Individualized Study** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 2005 to 2005]

**Adjunct Professor**

**CUNY- Hunter College** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 2006 to 2006]

**Harold Clurman Visiting Professor**

**SUNY-Buffalo State College** [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 2008 to 2008]

**Visiting Artist/Lecturer**

**Actors' Equity Association** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**Screen Actors Guild** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**American Federation of Television and Radio Artists** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**Society of Directors and Choreographers** [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

**Member**

**AEA's Committee for Racial Equality** [MEMBEROF]

[from 1994 to 1999]

**Chair**

**Actors' Equity Association, Eastern Regional Board** [MEMBEROF]

[from 1994 to 2009]

**Board Member**

**Actors' Equity Association** [MEMBEROF]

[from 1994 to 2009]

**Principal Councilor**

**Gallatin School of Individualized Study** [MEMBEROF]

[from 1995 to 2006]

**Dean's Council**

**La MaMa E.T.C.** [MEMBEROF]

[from 1998 to 2011]

**Board of Directors**

**Momentum AIDS Project** [MEMBEROF]

[from 1999 to ?]

**Spokesperson**

**Duke Ellington Foundation** [MEMBEROF]

[from 2007 to ?]

**Board of Directors**