

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Margaret Burroughs

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Burroughs, Margaret Taylor, 1917-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Margaret Burroughs,
<b>Dates:</b>	June 12, 2000
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2000
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:47:30).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Printmaker and museum director Margaret Burroughs (1917 - 2010 ) was a prominent artist who helped establish Chicago's South Side Community Arts Center and co-founded the DuSable Museum of African American History. Burroughs was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 12, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2000_012
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Artist, educator and institution-builder Margaret Burroughs was born on November 1, 1917 in Saint Rose, Louisiana. Always passionate about learning, Margaret moved north to Chicago in order to earn her Elementary Teacher's Certificate, which she received in 1937 from Chicago Normal College. She continued her education first at Chicago Teachers College, and later, at the Art Institute of Chicago, from which she earned her B.A. in Art Education in 1946 and her M.A. in 1948.

Dr. Margaret Burroughs made the first of her many contributions to African American arts and culture when she founded--at age 22--the South Side Community Art Center, a community organization that serves as a gallery and workshop studio for artists and students. Mrs. Burroughs continued to serve on the Board of Directors for the Center, which remained active more than sixty years after its formation.

During the mid-1950s Margaret Burroughs married Charles Burroughs, poet and founder of the Associated Negro Press. His organization, modeled on the Associated Press, played an important role in the coordination of African American newspapers throughout the United States. After extended travels together, the Burroughs' made the most well-known contribution to African American posterity in 1961 when they founded the DuSable Museum of African American History on the ground floor of their Chicago home. The museum, which has since moved to its own buildings in Chicago's Washington Park, has become an internationally recognized resource for African American art. DuSable Museum also hosts various educational programs and houses a permanent collection of more than thirteen thousand artifacts, artworks and books.

Although Margaret Burroughs worked in sculpture, painting, and many other artforms throughout her career, it was her exceptional skill as a printmaker that earned her a place within the history of art. For many years she worked with linoleum block prints to create images evocative of African American culture. Margaret Burroughs' work was featured in exclusive shows at the Corcoran Art Galleries in Washington D.C. and at the Studio Museum in New

York. She served as art director for the Negro Hall of Fame and illustrated many books including *What Shall I Tell My Children Who are Black?* (1968). Mrs. Burroughs also published several volumes of her own poems, illustrated a number of children's books, and exhibited her own artwork all over the world. In 1975 she received the President's Humanitarian Award and in 1977 was distinguished as one of Chicago's Most Influential Women by the Chicago Defender. February 1, 1986 was proclaimed "Dr. Margaret Burroughs Day" in Chicago by late Mayor Harold Washington.

Burroughs was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on June 12, 2000.

Burroughs passed away on November 21, 2010 at age 93.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Margaret Burroughs was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on June 12, 2000, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Printmaker and museum director Margaret Burroughs (1917 - 2010 ) was a prominent artist who helped establish Chicago's South Side Community Arts Center and co-founded the DuSable Museum of African American History.

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## 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Burroughs, Margaret Taylor, 1917-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Burroughs, Margaret Taylor, 1917---Interviews

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African American printmakers--Interviews

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African American museum directors--Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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DuSable Museum of African-American History

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## Occupations:

Printmaker

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Museum Director

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers|CivicMakers

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## 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 Margaret Burroughs, June 12, 2000. 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Margaret Burroughs, Section A2000\_012\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:19 ?

Margaret Burroughs slates the interview and shares her favorites. Burroughs was born in Saint Rose Parish, Louisiana on November 1, 1917, and migrated to Chicago with her family when she was five years old. Burroughs discusses her father Alexander Taylor, mother Octavia Taylor, and her childhood in the Bronzeville neighborhood of Chicago, citing her parents as having a positive impact on her life. Burroughs started drawing at the age of five with encouragement from her mother and was very athletic, having just missed the 1936 Olympics. Burroughs attended Englewood High School, where her teacher, Mary L. Ryan, helped her gain acceptance to Chicago Normal College where she earned a teaching certificate. Later she attended the Art Institute of Chicago, where she struggled at first. With the help of Kathleen Blacksheer, a teacher who helped to pay for her education, she earned a M.A. degree in art education.

African American families--Illinois--Chicago.

Bronzeville (Chicago, Ill.)--Social conditions.

African Americans--Migrations--History--20th century.

Education--Illinois--Chicago.

Mothers and daughters.

Childhood and youth--Illinois--Chicago.

Mentoring in education.

Video Oral History Interview with Margaret Burroughs, Section A2000\_012\_001\_002, TRT: 0:05:46 ?

Margaret Burroughs talks about how she inspires her students to achieve their career aspirations, and the founding of Chicago's South Side Community Arts Center in 1941.

Mentoring in education.

South Side Community Art Center.

African American artists as teachers--Illinois--Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with Margaret Burroughs, Section A2000\_012\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:35 ?

Margaret Burroughs talks about the rarely discussed Chicago Renaissance, which coincided with the Harlem Renaissance. Burroughs then discusses her artwork and why she views herself as a "People's Painter." She then talks about her marriages and her family. Margaret Burroughs discusses her encounter with and admiration for Paul Robeson. Burroughs explains her youthful political outspokenness, and the scrutiny she encountered during the McCarthy Era of the 1950s. She then details her trip to Mexico in 1952 and her friendship with artists

Elizabeth Catlett-Mora and Charles White. Lastly, Burroughs talks about her late husband, Charles Burroughs.

African American painters.

African American families--Illinois--Chicago.

White, Charles, 1918-1979.

African American women political activists.

Robeson, Paul, 1898-1976.

Catlett, Elizabeth, 1915-2012.

Video Oral History Interview with Margaret Burroughs, Section A2000\_012\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:50 ?

Margaret Burroughs summarizes the origin of the DuSable Museum of African American History from its earliest years, and how she obtained funding from Chicago businesses to support the museum. Burroughs then discusses the Black Arts Movement and the ways it has changed over the past half century. She then talks about the future she envisions for the DuSable Museum, hoping that there will be expansion and a cultural center integrated into the institution. Lastly, Burroughs shares her travel experiences in Africa.

DuSable Museum of African American History.

Travel--Africa.

Black Arts movement.

Video Oral History Interview with Margaret Burroughs, Section A2000\_012\_001\_005, TRT: 0:12:00 ?

Margaret Burroughs discusses her views on the African Diaspora and the need for unity across continents. Burroughs talks about the influential persons in her life, including artists who were her contemporaries, such as Elizabeth Catlett and Charles White. She then explains her personal philosophies on life and creativity, stressing the importance of arts education. Lastly, Burroughs comments on her legacy and how she would like to be remembered.

African diaspora.

Catlett, Elizabeth, 1915-2012.

White, Charles, 1918-1979.

Education in art.

Philosophies of life.