

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Maulana Karenga

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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>	Karenga, Maulana
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Maulana Karenga,
<b>Dates:</b>	November 18, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:59:43).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Community activist, africana studies professor, and author Maulana Karenga (1941 - ) is the founder of Kwanzaa, in addition to having a career as a prolific writer and influential figure in a number of Afrocentric movements. Karenga was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 18, 2002, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_207
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Dr. Maulana Karenga, professor of Africana Studies at California State University—Long Beach, was the holder of two Ph.D.'s. Karenga completed his degrees in political science at the United States International University, and in social ethics at the University of Southern California, before being awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Durban, South Africa.

Karenga's fields of teaching and research within Africana/Black Studies included: ancient Egyptian (Maatian) ethics; ancient Yoruba (Ifa) ethics; Africana/Black Studies theory and history; Africana/Black (continental and diasporan) philosophy; African American intellectual history; ethnic relations; and the socio-ethical thought of Malcolm X.

A prolific writer, Karenga authored numerous scholarly articles and books, including: *Maat, The Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt: A Study in Classical African Ethics*; *Selections From The Husia: Sacred Wisdom of Ancient Egypt*; *The Book of Coming Forth By Day: The Ethics of the Declarations of Innocence*; *Odu Ifa: The Ethical Teachings*; and *Introduction to Black Studies*. Karenga was also one of the creators of the pan-African cultural holiday Kwanzaa, and the Nguzo Saba (The Seven Principles), as well as the author of the authoritative text, *Kwanzaa: A Celebration of Family, Community and Culture*.

An activist-scholar of national and international recognition, Karenga played a major role in Black political and intellectual culture from the 1960s on. Karenga has, along with The Organization Us, been instrumental in such movements as Black Power, Black Arts, Black Studies, the Independent Schools, Afrocentricity, Ancient Egyptian Studies, the Million Person Marches, and the Reparations Movement. In addition to his activism, Karenga lectured on the life and struggle of African peoples on major campuses in the United States, Africa, the People's Republic of China, Cuba, Trinidad, Great Britain, and Canada. Karenga served as the chair of The Organization Us; the National Association of Kawaida Organizations; and as the executive director of the African American Cultural

Center and the Kawaida Institute of Pan-African Studies.

Karenga has received numerous awards for scholarship and service, including: the C.L.R. James Award for Outstanding Publication of Scholarly Works that Advance the Discipline of Africana and Black Studies; the National Leadership Award for Outstanding Scholarly Achievements in Black Studies from the National Council for Black Studies; the President's Award for Scholarship and Service in the Development of Black Studies from the African Heritage Studies Association; the Diop Exemplary Leadership Award from the Department of African American Studies-Temple University; the Richard Allen Living Legend Award from the African Methodist Episcopal Church; and the Pioneer Award from the Rainbow PUSH Coalition and Citizenship Education Fund.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Maulana Karenga was conducted by Larry Crowe on November 18, 2002, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Community activist, africana studies professor, and author Maulana Karenga (1941 - ) is the founder of Kwanzaa, in addition to having a career as a prolific writer and influential figure in a number of Afrocentric movements.

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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:

Karenga, Maulana

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Karenga, Maulana --Interviews

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African American anthropologists--Interviews

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African American civil rights workers--Interviews

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African American educators--Interviews

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African American historians--Interviews

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African American political activists--Interviews

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African American scholars--Interviews

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Universities and colleges--Faculty--Interviews

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Race awareness

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African American families

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Social values--United States

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Education--Maryland

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Black nationalism--United States--History--20th century

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Political School of Kawaida

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African Americans--Politics and government

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African Americans--Social life and customs

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Kwanzaa

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Congress of Racial Equality

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African Americans--Civil rights

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Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (U.S.)

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Black power--United States--History--20th century

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Ethics--Africa

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Spirituality--Africa

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Africa--Religious life and customs

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Spirituality--United States

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Black Arts movement

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Afrocentrism--United States

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African Americans--Race identity

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African Americans--Education

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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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**Occupations:**

Community Activist

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**HistoryMakers® Category:**

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 Maulana Karenga, November 18, 2002. 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).

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## 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 Maulana Karenga, Section A2002\_207\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:33  
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Maulana Karenga shares memories of his parents, describing their personalities and backgrounds. Karenga describes his childhood in Maryland, discussing how his parents and grandparents taught him race consciousness from a very early age. He also recalls his family's life as farm workers.

African American anthropologists--Interviews.

African American civil rights workers--Interviews.

African American educators--Interviews.

African American historians--Interviews.

African American political activists--Interviews.

African American scholars--Interviews.

Universities and colleges--Faculty--Interviews.

Race awareness.

African American college teachers--Ohio--Interviews.

Social values--United States.

Education--Maryland.

Black nationalism--United States--History--20th century.

Political School of Kawaïda.

African Americans--Politics and government.

African Americans--Social life and customs.

Kwanzaa.

Congress of Racial Equality.

African Americans--Civil rights.

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (U.S.).

Black power--United States--History--20th century.

Ethics--Africa.

Spirituality--Africa.

Africa--Religious life and customs.

Spirituality--United States.

Black Arts movement.

Afrocentrism--United States.

African Americans--Race identity.

African Americans--Education.

Video Oral History Interview with Maulana Karenga, Section A2002\_207\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:36  
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Maulana Karenga continues to describe his childhood in Maryland, recalling his rural way of life. Karenga then recounts his educational background, from elementary school through his undergraduate years, naming mentors and teachers who helped increase his social and political awareness. He details his undergraduate years at Los Angeles City College, focusing in particular on his development into a black nationalist.

Video Oral History Interview with Maulana Karenga, Section A2002\_207\_001\_003, TRT: 0:31:34  
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Maulana Karenga lists his intellectual influences that led to the development of his philosophy of Kawaida and the Nguzo Saba. He details his activism in the 1960s, particularly the creation of The Organization Us, and his cooperation with the Congress of Racial Equality and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Karenga then explains principles behind his philosophy of Kawaida.

Video Oral History Interview with Maulana Karenga, Section A2002\_207\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:37  
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Maulana Karenga details the creation of Kwanzaa out of his Kawaida philosophy and details its seven principles--unity, self-determination, collective work responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. He describes the rituals of Kwanzaa and responds to the criticisms most often voiced about the holiday, stressing that the holiday comes from the roots of African culture and is fit to be celebrated throughout the world.

Video Oral History Interview with Maulana Karenga, Section A2002\_207\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:55  
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Maulana Karenga recalls his deep involvement in the Black Power Movement of the 1970s. He then details the reasons for the rift between the Black Panther Party and The Organization Us, explaining how the FBI's COINTEL Program undermined the relationship between the two and how the organizations disagreed on key subjects such as black studies and whether culture should take precedence over politics.

Video Oral History Interview with Maulana Karenga, Section A2002\_207\_001\_006, TRT: 0:30:08  
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Maulana Karenga remembers the surveillance by the FBI's COINTEL Program that led to his incarceration and a shoot-out between the Black Panther Party and The Organization Us. He also recalls his involvement in several events after his release, including FESTAC 1977, a festival of black arts and culture, and the formation of the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilization, which sought to educate Americans about African history and civilization.

Video Oral History Interview with Maulana Karenga, Section A2002\_207\_001\_007, TRT: 0:29:38  
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Maulana Karenga details his involvement in the creation of several organizations and events, including the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilization, the National Black United Front, the African American Leadership Retreat Family, and the Million Man March. He also discusses the ancient Egyptian philosophical basis of ASCAC, and responds to criticisms of the Million Man March.

Video Oral History Interview with Maulana Karenga, Section A2002\_207\_001\_008, TRT: 0:28:42  
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Maulana Karenga discusses the impact of his current projects, including the African American Leadership Retreat Family and the African American Cultural Center. He discusses the philosophical concepts in the Odu Ifa, explaining the importance of African ethics and spirituality. Finally, Karenga reflects on his life and career and considers his legacy.