

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Zenobia Washington

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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>	Washington, Zenobia, 1966-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Zenobia Washington,
<b>Dates:</b>	December 5, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	3 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:29:54).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Doll artist Zenobia Washington (1966 - ) creates handmade dolls of traditional African American women. She is the art and culture editor for the International Association of Special Education newsletter. Washington was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 5, 2002, in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_222
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Artist Zenobia Grant Washington was born in Newark, New Jersey, on November 24, 1966, to J.H. Grant and Susan Armstrong. She graduated from Winyah Senior High School in Georgetown, South Carolina, in 1984. In 1987, Washington received an A.A. from the Art and Fashion Institute in Atlanta.

In 1998, Washington was deeply affected by the death of her only brother, Trevor, after which she was inspired to embark on a new phase of her life as an artist. Washington began to create handmade dolls of traditional African American women as "The Healer" and "The Washer Woman" that grew into a successful collection she calls "Women of Inspiration."

Washington took a nine-week entrepreneurial course at the Five Rivers Community Development Corporation's Diamonds in the Rough training program, where she learned to run her own business. She has served on the Five Rivers Community Development Corporation's Board of Directors in every capacity except treasurer. She served as the art and culture editor for the International Association of Special Education's newsletter. Washington's artwork has been featured in numerous art galleries and is enjoyed in many private art collections.

Washington married Willie Washington on October 5, 1991 in Georgetown, South Carolina. They have a daughter, Susan Alexis Washington, who was born in on July 29, 1994.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Zenobia Washington was conducted by Larry Crowe on December 5, 2002, in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, and was recorded on 3 Betacame SP videocassettes. Doll artist Zenobia Washington (1966 - ) creates handmade dolls of traditional African American women. She is the art and culture editor for the

International Association of Special Education newsletter.

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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:

Washington, Zenobia, 1966-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Washington, Zenobia, 1966---Interviews

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African American--Interviews.

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African American artists--Interviews.

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Dollmakers.

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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:

Doll Artist

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### HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers

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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 Zenobia Washington, December 5, 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 Zenobia Washington, Section A2002\_222\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Zenobia Washington was born on November 24, 1966 in Newark, New Jersey to Susan Davis Armstrong and Reverend Joseph Howell Grant. Susan Davis Armstrong was born on February 13, 1941 in Georgetown, South Carolina and was a crane operator the first female woman to work at Georgetown Steel. Armstrong's father, Joseph Davis, worked as a janitor and her mother, Mary

Davis, worked as a nurse. Armstrong's grandmother, Sarah Loggie, had been a slave on the Hobcaw Barony Plantation in Georgetown County, South Carolina. Reverend Joseph Howell Grant was born on October 8, 1941 in Georgetown, South Carolina to Reverend J. J. Grant and Lillie Mae Grant. His grandmother, Elisa Johnson Ward was a slave on the Arcadia plantation. Grant worked as a teacher at PS 166 in New York City, New York. When she was eight, Washington's parents divorced and she moved from the Bronx, New York to Georgetown, South Carolina with her mother and brother, Trevor Grant. In South Carolina, Washington learned about the Gullah/Geechee culture.

African American families--South Carolina.

Family--History.

Plantation life--South Carolina--Georgetown County--History.

Sea Islands Creole dialect.

Gullah women.

Race relations.

Video Oral History Interview with Zenobia Washington, Section A2002\_222\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:45 ?

Zenobia Washington moved to Georgetown, South Carolina from the Bronx, New York with her mother, Susan Davis Armstrong, and brother, Trevor Grant, when she was eight years old. In Georgetown, she attended Bynum Elementary School and Kensington Elementary School, which were much less diverse than P.S. 166, her school in New York City. Washington remembers her actions being strictly monitored by her grandparents, Mary Davis and Joseph Davis, and the close community of Georgetown. She attended Winyah High School, where she developed her personal style and dreamed of moving away from Georgetown. After graduating high school in 1984, Washington attended Columbia Junior College in Columbia, South Carolina and the Art and Fashion Institute in Atlanta, Georgia, where she received her Associates degree in 1987. She made belts and jewelry in Atlanta and Harlem, New York before marrying Willie Washington in 1991. In 1994, Washington moved back to Georgetown to take care of her brother, who was dying of AIDS.

Education & culture.

Roots (Television program : 1977)

Fashion.

African American grandmothers--South Carolina.

AIDS.

Video Oral History Interview with Zenobia Washington, Section A2002\_222\_001\_003, TRT: 0:31:29 ?

Zenobia Washington moved back to Georgetown, South Carolina in 1994 to look after her brother, Trevor Grant, who was dying of AIDS, and to work at Hospice of Georgetown County. That same year, she gave birth to her daughter, Susan Alexis Washington. After her brother died in 1998, Washington was depressed and the idea for making dolls came to her as a way of helping her feel better and honoring the women who had raised, supported, inspired her. Washington made her dolls out of used bottles and a combination of recycled and new fabrics. The first gallery to carry her work was Art Works in Litchfield, South Carolina. In addition to making dolls, Washington was involved in the Five Rivers Community Development Corporation and as an artist-in-residence in South Carolina schools, where she used creativity to work with students with behavioral problems. Washington reflects upon the importance of preserving

local history, her mother's pride in her, and her legacy. She ends the interview by narrating her photographs.

Grief in women.

Dollmaking--Therapeutic use.

Art--Study and teaching (Elementary)--Activity programs.

Historic preservation--South Carolina.

African American mothers--South Carolina.