

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Janet Langhart Cohen

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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>	Cohen, Janet Langhart, 1941-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Janet Langhart Cohen,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 18, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:00:00).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Television host and television producer Janet Langhart Cohen (1941 - ) is an award-winning television journalist and worked as a newspaper columnist for the Boston Herald. During her twenty-five year career, she has appeared on ABC, CBS, NBC and BET, and produced several programs, including, "On Capitol Hill with Janet Langhart." As an overseas correspondent, she covered news in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and special assignments for, "Entertainment Tonight." Cohen was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 18, 2005, in Chevy Chase, Maryland. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_072
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Award winning journalist, Janet Leola Floyd Langhart Cohen was born on December 22, 1941, in Indianapolis, Indiana. She was raised by a single mother who worked as a domestic. She earned her high school diploma from Crispus Attucks High School in 1959, where she was a member of the band and debate team.

From 1960 until 1962, Cohen attended Butler University. In 1962, she was hired as an Ebony Fashion Fair Model and toured across the United States with the group. Four years later, she moved to Chicago to pursue her modeling career and was hired by WBBM-TV as a weekend weather girl. While living in Chicago, Cohen befriended singer Mahalia Jackson, Muhamad Ali and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In 1972, she was hired by her hometown television station to host a new show, *Indy Today with Janet Langhart*.

The following year Cohen's career soared when she was hired by the ABC affiliate in Boston to host *Good Day in Boston*. During her twenty-five year career, she has appeared on ABC, CBS, NBC and BET, and produced several programs, including *On Capitol Hill with Janet Langhart*. As an overseas correspondent, she covered news in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and special assignments for *Entertainment Tonight*. Langhart also co-hosted *America's Black Forum* with Julian Bond.

Shortly after the death of Dr. King, Cohen married her first husband, Tony Langhart, a Chicago police detective. In 1978, she married Dr. Robert Kistner, a physician and one of the developers of the birth control pill. In 1996, Cohen married former Secretary of Defense, William Cohen. During his tenure she created and hosted *Special Assignment*, a weekly television program that was broadcast globally over the Armed Forces Network from 1997-2001.

In 2004, Cohen authored a book of her memoirs entitled *From Rage to Reason: My Life in Two Americas*. She has also worked as a columnist for the *Boston Herald* and served as a spokeswoman for Avon Cosmetics and *U.S. News and World Report*. She has been a judge for the White House Fellows Program and advised the Miss America Organization.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Janet Langhart Cohen was conducted by Racine Tucker Hamilton on March 18, 2005, in Chevy Chase, Maryland, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Television host and television producer Janet Langhart Cohen (1941 - ) is an award-winning television journalist and worked as a newspaper columnist for the Boston Herald. During her twenty-five year career, she has appeared on ABC, CBS, NBC and BET, and produced several programs, including, "On Capitol Hill with Janet Langhart." As an overseas correspondent, she covered news in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and special assignments for, "Entertainment Tonight."

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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:

Cohen, Janet Langhart, 1941-

Hamilton, Racine Tucker (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Cohen, Janet Langhart, 1941---Interviews

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African American television personalities--Interviews

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African American women journalists--Interviews

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Authors and publishers--Interviews

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African Americans--Relations with Indians

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Racially mixed people--Interviews

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African American families--Indiana--Indianapolis

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Indianapolis (Ind.)--Race relations

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Segregation in education--Indiana--Indianapolis

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Till, Emmett, 1941-1955--Death and burial

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Butler University

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African American models--Interviews

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Discrimination in employment--Massachusetts--Boston

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WBBM-TV (Television station : Chicago, Ill.)

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Divorce

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Schwarzenegger, Arnold

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United States--Army--African Americans--Social conditions

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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:**

Television Host

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Television Producer

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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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 Janet Langhart Cohen, March 18, 2005. 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 Janet Langhart Cohen, Section A2005\_072\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Janet Langhart Cohen shares stories of her parents background, her Native American heritage and her childhood in Indianapolis, Indiana. Cohen recalls such diverse events as attending a Klan rally, abd her father's brief return after WWII. Cohen explains that throughout her childhood, she was very aware of race and racism in the community. Cohen also describes the atmosphere in her household when she was a child.

African American television personalities--Interviews.

African American women journalists--Interviews.

Authors and publishers--Interviews.

African Americans--Relations with Indians.

Racially mixed people--Interviews.

African American families--Indiana--Indianapolis.

Indianapolis (Ind.)--Race relations.

Segregation in education--Indiana--Indianapolis.

Till, Emmett, 1941-1955--Death and burial.

Butler University.

African American models--Interviews.

Discrimination in employment--Massachusetts--Boston.

WBBM-TV (Television station : Chicago, Ill.).

Divorce.

Schwarzenegger, Arnold.

United States. Army--African Americans--Social conditions.

Video Oral History Interview with Janet Langhart Cohen, Section A2005\_072\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Media consultant Janet Langhart Cohen details her childhood in segregated Indianapolis, describing her neighborhood, elementary school, and high school . Cohen also recalls the profound effect Emmett Till's murder had upon her and the black community, and describes racial issues she encountered while in college at Butler University. She also describes her efforts to start a career in modeling, and how she was thwarted by a racist charm school owner.

Video Oral History Interview with Janet Langhart Cohen, Section A2005\_072\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:20 ?

Media consultant Janet Langhart Cohen describes the successful beginning of her career in broadcast journalism. Starting as an Ebony Fashion Fair model in the early 1960s, Cohen also had opportunities to mingle with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahalia Jackson. After starting on WBBM-TV in Chicago as a weather broadcaster, Cohen soon had her own show in Indianapolis, Indy Today. She describes her experience in commuting between the two cities and juggling different jobs, becoming known as 'Queen of Interstate 65'. Her success in those markets led her to pursue a more prominent position in Boston at Good Morning. Upon arriving in Boston, Cohen was shocked to experience hostility from her black colleagues and overt racism from whites.

Video Oral History Interview with Janet Langhart Cohen, Section A2005\_072\_001\_004, TRT: 0:31:10 ?

Former newscaster, Janet Langhart Cohen, details her three marriages, the causes for their breakups, and how she and her third husband have stayed together. Cohen also discusses her broadcast career, and a run-in with Arnold Schwarzenegger, while on a film junket in France. She also discusses issues facing people of color serving in the military and the snubbing she still receives from members of Congress.