

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lynn Nottage

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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>	Nottage, Lynn
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Lynn Nottage,
<b>Dates:</b>	December 5, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	3 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:24:44).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Playwright Lynn Nottage (1964 - ) has written several highly successful plays, including, "Crumbs from the Table of Joy," in 1996. In 2003, her drama, "Intimate Apparel," a play about an African American seamstress in turn of the century New York, won major awards including the New York Drama Critics Circle Award. Nottage was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 5, 2005, in Brooklyn, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_252
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Playwright Lynn Nottage was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1964. At age eight, she had already written her first play. Her inspiration came from the women in her family. Her grandmother, mother, and other women were the nurses, teachers, activists and artists in the Brooklyn neighborhood where she grew up. Nottage is a graduate of New York's High School of Music and Art in Harlem where she earned her high school diploma in 1982. That same year, she enrolled at Brown University where she received her B.A. degree in 1986. She continued her studies and received her M.F.A. degree in playwriting at Yale School of Drama in 1989.

Nottage became a full-time playwright in the 1990s after spending four years at Amnesty International as national press officer. Her first break came as a commissioned monologue for a musical entitled, *A...My Name is Still Alice*. In 1993, her short play, *Poof!*, about a woman whose husband spontaneously combusts premiered at the Actors Theater in Louisville, Kentucky, where it won the Heideman Award. In 1996, the Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago, Illinois, produced one of her most known plays, *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, in its family outreach series.

Nottage took a break from writing for nearly seven years, but in 2003, her drama *Intimate Apparel*, a play about an African American seamstress in turn of the century New York, won major awards including the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, the Francesca Primus Prize and the Steinberg Award. In 2004, actress Viola Davis won a Drama Desk Award for her outstanding performance in *Intimate Apparel* at the Roundabout Theatre Company in New York City.

Nottage's plays are being produced the world wide. She continues to write in her Brooklyn home where she resides with her husband and daughter.

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# Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Lynn Nottage was conducted by Shawn Wilson on December 5, 2005, in Brooklyn, New York, and was recorded on 3 Betacame SP videocassettes. Playwright Lynn Nottage (1964 - ) has written several highly successful plays, including, "Crumbs from the Table of Joy," in 1996. In 2003, her drama, "Intimate Apparel," a play about an African American seamstress in turn of the century New York, won major awards including the New York Drama Critics Circle Award.

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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:

Nottage, Lynn

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Nottage, Lynn--Interviews

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African American women dramatists--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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### Occupations:

Playwright

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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 Lynn Nottage, December 5, 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 Lynn Nottage, Section A2005\_252\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:15 ?

Lynn Nottage was born on November 2, 1964 in Brooklyn, New York to Jeannette Ruby Newton Nottage and Wallace Nottage. Her mother was born in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York on October 10, 1934 to Waple Newton and William “Buck” Wynne (ph.), though she was later

adopted by Earl Newton. Waple Newton's mother, Ethel Boyce Armstrong, was born in Barbados and came to New York City around 1911. She married George Armstrong, but he died shortly after emigrating from Panama. Jeannette Ruby Newton was the principal of P.S. 93 William H. Prescott School and founded The Black School in Brooklyn with Betty Shabazz and Eugenia Clarke. Nottage's father, a social worker, was born in 1928 in Harlem, New York to Dorothy Nottage. Nottage's parents married in Harlem in 1960. Nottage recalls her childhood in Boerum Hill, Brooklyn. She attended the Saint Ann's School in New York City and The High School of Music and Art in Harlem, where she wrote her first play, "The Darker Side of Verona."

African American women dramatists--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Lynn Nottage, Section A2005\_252\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:28 ?

Lynn Nottage's early exposure to theater included seeing Charles Fuller's plays at the Negro Ensemble Company. She recalls her interest in hip hop during the 1980s and how it spoke to her generation of African Americans. In 1982, Nottage graduated from the High School of Music and Art in New York City, New York. She enrolled at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island despite her guidance counselor's discouragement. At Brown, she met her playwriting mentor, George Houston Bass, and was inspired by African American women writers like Ntozake Shange, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, and Lorraine Hansberry. After graduating from Brown in 1986, Nottage enrolled at the Yale School of Drama in New Haven, Connecticut. She received her M.F.A. degree in 1989 and became a national press officer for Amnesty International where she worked until 1993. From 1993 to 1995, Nottage joined a multicultural writing collective and wrote "Poof!," "Ida Mae Cole Takes a Stance," "Por'Knockers," and "Crumbs from the Table of Joy."

Video Oral History Interview with Lynn Nottage, Section A2005\_252\_001\_003, TRT: 0:26:01 ?

Lynn Nottage wrote the play "Mud, River, Stone" in 1997, during the time when her mother died and her daughter, Ruby Gerber, was born. Inspired by these two events, Nottage wrote her play "Intimate Apparel," which was performed by the South Coast Repertory in Costa Mesa, California and Center Stage in Baltimore, Maryland before opening with the Roundabout Theatre Company in New York City, New York with Viola Davis in the lead role. In 2004, Nottage also premiered "Fabulation, or the Re-Education of Undine." Nottage talks about the contemporary African American playwrights, including members of the New Dramatists and the African American Playwrights Unit at Playwrights Horizons, and reflects on how her own success has changed her identity as an artist. Nottage describes her plans for two future plays, "Ruined" and "By the Way, Meet Vera Stark." She ends the interview by reflecting on her legacy, the legacy of African American theater, and the importance of The HistoryMakers' project.