

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Sonjia W. Young

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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>	Young, Sonjia W., 1941-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Sonjia W. Young,
<b>Dates:</b>	October 13, 2006
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2006
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:16:00).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Community leader Sonjia W. Young (1941 - ) founded Eventions, Inc., one of the top event planning and communications companies in the southeast United States. Young was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 13, 2006, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2006_117
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Founder of Eventions, Inc., one of the first minority and female owned full-service communications companies, Sonjia Waller Young was born Sonjia Amar on October 6, 1941, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Her parents, Bernadette Louise Honore Amar and Apollonare Germain Amar, were both of Creole heritage. Young attended St. Francis Xavier School and McKinley High School. When her parents passed away, she moved in with her sister at Southern University. She graduated from Southern High School in 1959 and went on to earn her B.A., B.S. and Masters degrees in educational counseling from Southern University.

When she was seventeen years old, Young was asked to join the Ebony Fashion Fair as a model when it came to Baton Rouge. After touring with the Ebony Fashion Fair, Young married the late Walton Waller, a United States Air Force pilot, and lived for a while in Germany. In 1970, she married Dr. Walter Young and moved to Atlanta, Georgia, where she worked as a teacher and counselor at Atlanta Junior College, Clark Atlanta University, and Georgia State University. During these years, Young also worked as an interior designer. In 1982, she founded Eventions, Inc., which has become one of the top event planning/communications companies in the Southeast. Eventions' clients include: The Coca Cola Company, Georgia Pacific Corporation, AME Conferences, Coors Brewing Company, DeKalb International Training Center and the Pan African Conference. Young has also worked with Maya Angelou, Oprah Winfrey, Harry Belafonte, Dick Gregory, Andrew Young, Muhammad Ali, and others. Eventions renovated the Wachovia Bank Building in East Point, Georgia, as the company's headquarters.

Young is the recipient of numerous awards. Among these are: "One Hundred Top Business Owners in Georgia," *Women Looking Ahead Magazine's* "Blue Print Award," the Atlanta Business League's "Diamond Award," the *Atlanta Tribune's* "Salute to Black Business Owners Award," ITC's "James Costen Award," and the Atlanta Media Women's "Public Relations Award." Frequently appearing as an inspirational speaker in the Atlanta area schools, Young, who has four grown children, is an avid supporter of educational efforts for youth. A member of Atlanta's First Congregational Church, Young enjoys golf and yoga in her spare time.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Sonjia W. Young was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 13, 2006, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Community leader Sonjia W. Young (1941 - ) founded Eventions, Inc., one of the top event planning and communications companies in the southeast United States.

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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:

Young, Sonjia W., 1941-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Young, Sonjia W., 1941- --Interviews

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African American women executives--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews

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Meeting planners--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews

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Women planners--Georgia--Atlanta--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:

Civic Leader

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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 Sonjia W. Young, October 13, 2006. 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 Sonjia W. Young, Section A2006\_117\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:10

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Sonjia W. Young was born on October 6, 1941 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana to Bernadette Honore Amar and Appolinare Amar. Her maternal family was Creole, and had French, Nigerian, Irish and Native American ancestry. Young's mother grew up in Baton Rouge, where her family owned the Harvey Honore Enterprises, LLC construction company. They had relatives in Chenault, Louisiana, where Young's father was raised. While visiting her family in Chenault, Young once tried picking cotton, but preferred picnicking. In California, she once stayed with her uncle who passed as white, and was asked not to bring her dark skinned friend. Young also experienced racial discrimination herself, and was excluded from her white friends' social events. Young was the youngest of her parents' children, including her two sisters and two half-siblings from their previous marriages. Her oldest sister attended nursing school in New York City. When Young was thirteen years old, her mother died, and her father passed away two years later.

African American women executives--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews.

Meeting planners--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews.

Women planners--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Sonjia W. Young, Section A2006\_117\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:50

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Sonjia W. Young attended the St. Francis Xavier School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana until her father's death, when she moved in with her older sister. Young then enrolled at McKinley High School, where she was bullied for her fair complexion. She soon transferred to the Southern University Laboratory School. When the Ebony Fashion Fair came to Baton Rouge, editor Freda DeKnight offered Young the opportunity to model. Young gained her sister's permission to model by agreeing to enroll in college after a one-year tour. With fellow model Corinne Huff, Young was offered a position singing back-up for Dinah Washington, but remembered her promise to her sister, and returned to Baton Rouge to study interior design at Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College. Young married Walton Waller, Sr., and had two children. They moved to Germany when Waller joined the U.S. Army, but he was killed in combat, and Young returned again to Baton Rouge. There, she began a master's degree, and met her second husband.

Video Oral History Interview with Sonjia W. Young, Section A2006\_117\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:10

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Sonjia W. Young moved to Atlanta, Georgia after marrying Dr. Walter Young, a dentist. She worked in interior design before earning a master's degree in counselor education. Young then worked with several universities, including Atlanta Metropolitan State College, which was established by her sister-in-law, Jean Childs Young. In 1982, Young took the advice of airline executive George Jackson, and used her volunteer experience in event planning to found Eventions, Inc. She considered adding tours to her event planning company's repertoire, but reconsidered after leading a tour for librarians. Over the years, Eventions, Inc. planned events like the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.; the Atlanta Life Financial Group's hundredth anniversary party; and the 100 Black Men of America, Inc. convention. However, because Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young was her brother-in-law, Young worked very little on the 1996 Summer Olympics. She explains why she prefers to work with corporations, especially those owned by people of color.

Video Oral History Interview with Sonjia W. Young, Section A2006\_117\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:50

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Sonjia W. Young was asked by the King family to plan Coretta Scott King's funeral, and coordinated numerous high profile speakers and attendants, such as actor Harry Belafonte, Reverend Walter Fauntroy, President George H.W. Bush, and President James Earl "Jimmy" Carter. The funeral had high security, and Young was almost removed from the event by the U.S. Secret Service. Young also planned a tribute roast celebrating Reverend Joseph Lowery. Outside of work, Young was active at the Andrew and Walter Young Family YMCA in Atlanta, Georgia, where she mentored young women, and planned to develop a golf program for children. At the time of the interview, Young was organizing a fundraiser for the First Congregational Church, where she was an active member. Young talks about her children and grandchildren, and her hopes and concerns for the African American community. She also reflects upon her life, legacy and how she would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Sonjia W. Young, Section A2006\_117\_001\_005, TRT: 0:17:00  
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Sonjia W. Young narrates her photographs.