

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Marjorie Moon

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Moon, Marjorie, 1946-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Marjorie Moon,
Dates:	January 25, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:27:17).
Abstract:	Stage director and stage producer Marjorie Moon (1946 -) served as the president and executive director of the Billie Holiday Theatre, in addition to directing and producing several plays. Moon was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 25, 2007, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_030
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Theatre producer and director Marjorie Moon was born on May 14, 1946, in Kokomo, Indiana. For over thirty years, Moon served as the President and Executive Director of the Billie Holiday Theatre in Brooklyn, New York. Moon's passion for theater began early as she spent time at the Karamu House Theater in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1964, Moon received her diploma from Collinwood High School; around the same time, she became one of the youngest members in the Cleveland Women's Orchestra. In 1968, Moon earned her B.A. degree from Ohio University and went on to complete her studies at Temple University in 1970 with an M.A. degree.

Moon began her professional career teaching acting at Hampton University. Moving to New York in 1973, Moon became the Executive Director of the Billie Holiday Theatre in Brooklyn, a theatre that has provided African American playwrights, set-builders, and other creative individuals an arena to work and nurture their talents.

As a director, Moon has worked on several plays, including Weldon Irvine's *Young, Gifted and Broke*, which ran for eight months and won four prestigious AUDELCO Awards. Moon also directed a production of *Over Forty* at the New Freedom Theatre in Philadelphia. As a producer, Moon produced more than 150 productions. In 1981, *Inacent Black*, a play originally produced at the Billie Holiday Theatre, opened on Broadway, starring Melba Moore.

Moon received several awards for her work in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, New York. In 2005, the Billie Holiday Theatre received a \$900,000 grant for its line-up of new plays.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Marjorie Moon was conducted by Shawn Wilson on January 25, 2007, in New

York, New York, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Stage director and stage producer Marjorie Moon (1946 -) served as the president and executive director of the Billie Holiday Theatre, in addition to directing and producing several plays.

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®.

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.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Moon, Marjorie, 1946-

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Moon, Marjorie, 1946- --Interviews

African American theatrical producers and directors--Interviews

African Americans in the performing arts--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Stage Director

Stage Producer

HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers

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 Marjorie Moon, January 25, 2007. 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).

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.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Marjorie Moon, Section A2007_030_001_001, TRT: 0:30:33 ?
Marjorie Moon was born on May 14, 1946 in Kokomo, Indiana to Ruth Black Moon and William Moon. Her mother was also born in Kokomo, and was raised by her four older sisters after Moon's maternal grandmother, Edna Black, died when Moon's mother was a teenager. Moon's parents met in Kokomo while her

father, a trombone player in the first all-black U.S. Navy band, was stationed there. They married, and returned to his hometown of Cleveland, Ohio at the end of World War II. There, Moon's father obtained master's degrees in education and music. Her parents both taught in the public schools, and Moon's paternal aunt led Cleveland's first black nursing association after receiving her nursing degree from Meharry Medical College. In Cleveland, Moon grew up with her three siblings, and attended a small church next door to her family's home, as well as Werner United Methodist Church. She often went shopping with her paternal grandmother, Anna Moon.

African American theatrical producers and directors--Interviews.

African Americans in the performing arts--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Marjorie Moon, Section A2007_030_001_002, TRT: 0:30:07 ?

Marjorie Moon grew up in Cleveland, Ohio. As a child, she resented performing Easter speeches with her younger siblings, whom she considered poor actors. At Rosedale Elementary School, Moon was introduced to theater at a marionette performance. Moon's teacher, Thomasina Davis, brought her to theatrical productions at the Karamu House, and invited her to join the girls' vocal ensemble. However, Moon's parents forbade her from participating after she returned home late from practice. In junior high school, Moon learned to play the double bass; and, at age fifteen, became the youngest member of the Cleveland Women's Orchestra. She continued playing bass at Collinwood High School, and received a four-year scholarship to study music therapy at Ohio University. As a child, Moon's best friends were white, but she did not feel different from them until older children mocked her race. She continued to experience discrimination, and was isolated from her high school's majority white student body.

Video Oral History Interview with Marjorie Moon, Section A2007_030_001_003, TRT: 0:29:32 ?

Marjorie Moon experienced racial discrimination at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. After the assassination of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., a fellow resident advisor asked her to calm a possible uprising of African American students, but she refused to do so. She also refused to participate in a play for a class after being cast as the maid. Upon graduating in 1968, she followed her theater professor, Arthur Wagner, to Temple University, and earned a master's degree in 1970. Moving on to Hampton Institute, Moon taught theater, and created a touring theater company. She learned that her sister's husband, a Black Panther, had been murdered in California while the company was performing at Cleveland's Karamu House. In 1972, Moon joined her friend, author Weldon Irvine, in New York City. Through Judge Joseph Williams, a board member at Hampton Institute, she secured a position as director of Brooklyn's Billie Holiday Theatre. There, she created workshops, and staged Sandra Beth Williams' 'Sunshine Loving.'

Video Oral History Interview with Marjorie Moon, Section A2007_030_001_004, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Marjorie Moon moved to New York City in 1973, where she saw Vinette Carroll's 'Your Arms Too Short to Box with God' on Broadway. In 1981, she directed A. Marcus Hemphill's 'Inacent Black and the Five Brothers' at the Billie Holiday Theatre in Brooklyn, New York, and the play later opened on Broadway with funding from the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation and several African American investors. After the production received poor reviews, Moon campaigned to raise additional money, despite having just undergone surgery. Even so, the play closed after three weeks. She talks about the artists who came out of the Billie Holiday Theatre, including Debbie Allen, Tichina Arnold and Marcus Miller. Moon also describes the African American

theater community of New York City, including the Negro Ensemble Company and the New Federal Theatre, and the role of community theaters. In 2005, she helped to found the Coalition of Theaters of Color, a political organization that lobbied for increased funding for the arts.

Video Oral History Interview with Marjorie Moon, Section A2007_030_001_005, TRT: 0:27:55 ?

Marjorie Moon considered the Billie Holiday Theatre to be responsible for educating and entertaining the local community in Brooklyn, New York. The theater trained African American stage technicians, and hosted educational programming with speakers like Harvard Law School's Professor Charles Ogletree, author Nikki Giovanni and media entrepreneur Terrie Williams. The Billie Holiday Theatre also staged the works of playwrights like Joyce Sylvester, John Henry Redwood and Cliff Roguemoore. In the early 2000s, Moon became frustrated by the gentrification of the theater's neighborhood in Brooklyn, although she enjoyed having new restaurants nearby. She received a grant in 2005 to expand the theater, and describes her renovation plans for the space, which included doubling the theater's capacity to 450 seats. She reflects upon her career as director of the Billie Holiday Theatre, and the growing opportunities for artists of color on Broadway.