

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with LaVerne Sci

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Sci, LaVerne, 1940-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with LaVerne Sci,
Dates:	February 25, 2008
Bulk Dates:	2008
Physical Description:	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:37:05).
Abstract:	Historic site manager LaVerne Sci (1940 -) was the historic site manager of the Paul Laurence Dunbar House in Dayton, Ohio. She was also an educator in North Carolina and Illinois. Sci was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 25, 2008, in Dayton, Ohio. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2008_027
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Historic Site Manager LaVerne Cecile Kenon Sci was born on January 3, 1940 in Jacksonville, Florida to Thelma Olivia Moore, a teacher, and Reuben R. Kenon, a high school principal. As a child, Sci attended segregated schools of Kings Welcome, College Park Elementary, Richardson Elementary and Richardson High School. As a youth, Sci desired to become a dancer, and her mother would drive sixty miles for her to take dance lessons.

In 1956, Sci entered Hampton University where she pursued her B.S. degree in health, physical education, recreation and biology. She led a very active life at Hampton University. She was the head majorette, a member of the dance group, worked on the school newspaper and was a member of the historic Phyllis Wheatley Society. After completing her degree at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, she went on to teach in Fayetteville, North Carolina and then Farragut High School in Chicago, Illinois from 1960 until 1962. Sci then entered the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where she pursued a combined M.A./Ph.D. program in History and Philosophy of Education.

After Sci's mother lost her job helping to integrate the public schools of Columbia County, Florida, Sci dropped out of the University of Illinois in 1965 and worked as a teacher in the Unit Four Public School District to help support her mother's legal struggle. In 1968, she met and married Frank Sci, a serviceman in the United States Air Force. Together, they relocated to Naha, Okinawa, Japan, there they became parents to two daughters, LaFrae and LaTania. The family then relocated to Montana, and they moved in 1972 to Dayton, Ohio where Frank was stationed as a Lieutenant Colonel. In Dayton, their son, Kenon Travis, was born. Parental responsibilities led Sci into community activism. In 1989, Sci was hired as Historic Site Manager of the Paul Laurence Dunbar House Museum in Dayton, Ohio.

Sci was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 24, 2008.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with LaVerne Sci was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 25, 2008, in Dayton, Ohio, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Historic site manager LaVerne Sci (1940 -) was the historic site manager of the Paul Laurence Dunbar House in Dayton, Ohio. She was also an educator in North Carolina and Illinois.

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:

Sci, LaVerne, 1940-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Sci, LaVerne, 1940- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Historic Site Manager

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 LaVerne Sci, February 25, 2008. 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 LaVerne Sci, Section A2008_027_001_001, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

LaVerne Sci was born on January 3, 1940 in Jacksonville, Florida to Thelma Moore Evans and Reubin Kenon. Her maternal great-grandfather was a white man named Frank Gartrell, whose brother was a state senator in Georgia. Because he was unable to legally marry Sci's great-grandmother, who had African American ancestry, they raised their children in isolation on a large farm near Washington, Georgia. Sci's maternal grandfather became a Methodist minister and storeowner, and married her grandmother, a graduate of Paine College who gave up her teaching career to raise children. Sci's paternal

grandfather, Andrew Kenon, was the son of former slave Briton Kenon, and owned a farm in Quincy, Florida. There, her paternal grandmother, Nany Kenon, helped Sci's father with his field work so that he could obtain an education. With his friend, LaSalle D. Leffall, Sr., Sci's father travelled on foot from Quincy to the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes in Tallahassee, Florida.

Video Oral History Interview with LaVerne Sci, Section A2008_027_001_002, TRT: 0:27:00 ?

Laverne Sci's father, Reubin Kenon, graduated from the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes alongside LaSalle D. Leffall, Sr., who became a school principal in Quincy, Florida. Sci's father served as a principal in Byromville, Georgia, where he met Sci's mother, Thelma Moore Evans. They married in 1936, and moved to Lake City, Florida, where her father found work as a principal in the Columbia County School District. He also became a 33rd Degree Mason, and served as the black community's air raid warden during World War II. When Sci was four years old, her father passed away. Her mother then obtained a teaching position at the King's Welcome School, where Sci began her education. Outside of school, she participated in programs at the local black churches. Sci went on to attend Lake City's Richardson High School. She often visited Ocean Pond with her classmates, and studied dance on the weekends in Jacksonville, Florida.

Video Oral History Interview with LaVerne Sci, Section A2008_027_001_003, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Laverne Sci was raised by her mother, Thelma Moore Evans, in Lake City, Florida. Upon entering the seventh grade, Sci moved to her aunt's home in Champaign, Illinois in order to facilitate her dance training. She attended Champaign Junior High School, where she experienced integrated education for the first time, although she was barred from an all-white Girl Scout troop. Sci returned to Florida during the eighth grade, and then began the ninth grade in Champaign, where a former friend rejected her because of her race. Finally, Sci returned to Lake City, where she enrolled at Richardson High School. She served as a majorette and a member of the girl patrol, and was influenced by her English teacher, Ms. Lofton, who excelled as an educator despite the school's lack of resources. Sci remembers one of her father's students, who died while wearing secondhand football gear. She also recalls learning about Paul Laurence Dunbar from her mother, who often recited Dunbar's poetry.

Video Oral History Interview with LaVerne Sci, Section A2008_027_001_004, TRT: 0:28:10 ?

Laverne Sci attended the all-black Richardson High School in Lake City, Florida, which was denied accreditation and resources like a sufficient number of desks. Upon graduation, she enrolled in Professor Ella Gamble's dance program at the Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia. There, she studied under historian J. Saunders Redding, and was often invited to literary salons at the homes of her professors and the campus minister. After a conflict with a professor forestalled her graduation in 1960, Sci transferred to Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, where she was one of a few black students. Sci completed her bachelor's degree in 1961, and was hired to teach at Farragut High School in Chicago, Illinois. She soon became frustrated with the administration, who prevented her from promoting black students to the accelerated track; and decided to begin a Ph.D. degree in history and philosophy at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Video Oral History Interview with LaVerne Sci, Section A2008_027_001_005, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Laverne Sci began a combined master's and Ph.D. degree program in 1965 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Shortly afterwards, Sci's mother, Principal Thelma Moore Evans, became involved in the school

integration movement in Columbia County, Florida; and, in reprisal, was placed on unpaid leave by the superintendent. During this time, Sci financially supported her mother, and left school to work in the Champaign Unit 4 School District. She met Frank Sci, a student at the Air Force Institute of Technology, in 1968; and was visiting his base in Tennessee when Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis. The couple married later in 1968, and moved to Okinawa, Japan, where their daughters, LaFrae Sci and LaTania Sci, were born. Sci and her family lived in Dayton, Ohio from 1972 to 1979, when they relocated temporarily to Japan for her husband's U.S. military career. She returned with her family to Dayton in 1982.

Video Oral History Interview with LaVerne Sci, Section A2008_027_001_006, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Laverne Sci raised her family in Dayton, Ohio. There, she successfully petitioned against a racist mural of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at Beavercreek High School, where her daughters were students. After her daughters entered college, Sci decided to return to the workforce, and was hired at Dayton's Paul Laurence Dunbar House. At this point in the interview, Sci describes the history of the Paul Laurence Dunbar House, which was purchased by the State of Ohio following the death of Dunbar's mother, Matilda Murphy Dunbar, in 1934. The house was initially occupied by tenants, who stole some of the artifacts; and, after the structure fell into disrepair, it was given to the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society. Eventually, the Paul Laurence Dunbar House came to the attention of state legislator C.J. McLin, who began the renovations. Sci joined the staff in 1989, and developed the house into a museum with tours and exhibits.

Video Oral History Interview with LaVerne Sci, Section A2008_027_001_007, TRT: 0:26:50 ?

Laverne Sci was the historic site manager of the Paul Lawrence Dunbar House in Dayton, Ohio. In this part of the interview, Sci reflects upon her personal connection to Paul Laurence Dunbar. She also talks about the African American authors who preceded Dunbar, including William Sanders Scarborough; as well as Charles W. Dustin, a white judge who was instrumental in the reburial of Dunbar's remains beside the founders of the City of Dayton in 1915. In addition, Sci describes the research that she conducted during the late 1980s, which led to the discovery of the gravesite of African American journalist and abolitionist Martin Delany in Wilberforce, Ohio.

Video Oral History Interview with LaVerne Sci, Section A2008_027_001_008, TRT: 0:17:25 ?

Laverne Sci reflects upon the legacy of author Paul Laurence Dunbar, and recites his poem, 'We Wear the Mask.' She also talks about her family, including the death of her mother, who was never able to visit the Paul Laurence Dunbar House. Sci reflects upon her life and legacy, and her hopes and concerns for the African American community. She concludes the interview by describing how she would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with LaVerne Sci, Section A2008_027_Sci_LaVerne_06_MED_001, TRT: