

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Robert Battle

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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>	Battle, Robert, 1972-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Robert Battle,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 27, 2010
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2010
<b>Physical Description:</b>	2 uncompressed MOV digital video files (1:00:17).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Dancer and choreographer Robert Battle (1972 - ) was the third artistic director of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Battle was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 27, 2010, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2010_107
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Dancer and choreographer Robert Louis Battle was born on August 28, 1972 in Jacksonville, Florida to Marie Battle. Three weeks after his birth, Battle was adopted by his great-uncle Willie Horne. He was raised by Horne and his daughter Dessie Horne. Battle started dancing in high school and graduated from the New World School of Arts in Miami, Florida. He went on to attend The Julliard School, where he graduated in 1994. Battle joined Parsons Dance Company where he performed and choreographed for the next seven years. During this time, Battle also choreographed his first piece for an Alvin Ailey Foundation dance company; the piece was entitled *Mood Indigo* and was performed by the Ailey II Company in 1999.

In 2001, Battle left Parsons to found Battleworks Dance Company, a company he directed for the next nine years. During this time, Battle developed a close relationship with the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, choreographing his first piece for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, *Juba*, in 2003, and working alongside Judith Jamison and hip-hop choreographer Rennie Harris to create *Love Stories* in 2004. He continued to provide material for the group and conduct workshops at the Alvin Ailey School from 2006 until 2008. In 2009, Battle's work with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater culminated in the announcement by Judith Jamison, artistic director of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, that Battle would succeed her as the company's artistic director in July of 2011.

Battle was named as one of the Masters of African American Choreography by the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in 2005, and has received numerous other awards for professional excellence. He has performed or choreographed for venues such as the Joyce Theater, the American Dance Festival, the Dance Theater Workshop, and the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival.

Robert Battle was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 27, 2010.

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# Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Robert Battle was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 27, 2010, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 2 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Dancer and choreographer Robert Battle (1972 - ) was the third artistic director of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

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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:

Battle, Robert, 1972-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Battle, Robert, 1972- --Interviews

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Choreographers--Interviews

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African American dancers--Interviews

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African American dance teachers--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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Alvin Ailey American Dance Center

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Battleworks Dance Company, Alvin Ailey American Dance Center

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# Occupations:

Dancer

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Choreographer

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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 Robert Battle, August 27, 2010. 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 Robert Battle, Section A2010\_107\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:36 ?

Robert Battle was born on August 28, 1972 in Jacksonville, Florida to Marie Battle and Louis Coleman. He lived with his great aunt and great uncle, Anna Horne and Willie Horne, in Miami, Florida until his great aunt's death in 1979. He was then raised by his second cousin, Dessie Horne Williams, who fostered his artistic talents. He read poetry, and sang in the choir at Wactor Temple African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Battle attended Orchard Villa Elementary School and Allapattah Junior High School; and, at fourteen years old, inspired by an Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performance, began taking dance lessons at the Performing and Visual Arts Center. He attended Miami Northwestern High School, and then the New World School of the Arts. Upon graduating, he received a full dance scholarship to The Julliard School, where he was mentored by dancer Carolyn Adams; and won the Martha Hill Prize for Outstanding Achievement and Leadership in Dance and the Princess Grace Statue Award. He graduated in 1994.

African American families--Florida--Miami.

African American churches--Florida--Miami.

Riots--Florida--Miami.

Performing arts high schools--Florida--Miami.

Performing arts--Study and teaching (Higher)--New York (State)--New York.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Battle, Section A2010\_107\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:41 ?

Robert Battle met dance instructor Denise Jefferson as a dance student at The Julliard School in New York City. After graduating, he joined the Parsons Dance Company as a dancer. Owner David Parsons recognized his choreography talent, and invited him to choreograph for the company. Later, at the request of company director Sylvia Waters, Battle composed 'Mood Indigo' and 'Takademe' for Ailey II, Alvin Ailey's second dance company. In 2002, he founded his own group, the Battleworks Dance Company. Impressed by his work, Judith Jamison hired Battle to create a ballet for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 2003, for which he composed 'Juba.' Battle performed alongside Jamison and Rennie Harris in the dance 'Love Stories.' In 2010, Battle was selected as the artistic director designate of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. He reflects upon his aspirations for the future of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, his advice to young dancers, his legacy and how he would like to be remembered.

Kathak (Dance)--India.

Parsons Dance Company.

Battleworks Dance Company.

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Ailey, Alvin.

Jamison, Judith.