

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Gwen Mazer

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Mazer, Gwen
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Gwen Mazer,
Dates:	November 8, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	8 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:58:12).
Abstract:	Personal style and image consultant and author Gwen Mazer (1950 -) was the first African American to serve a junior executive at Lord & Taylor department store and as Fashion editor at Harper's Bazaar magazine. She also founded Total Image Management and the Gwen Mazer Collection. Mazer was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 8, 2013, in San Francisco, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_256
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Fashion and image consultant Gwen Mazer was born in New York City. She was one of two children born to Theodore Goodman, a postal worker; and Edythe Goodman, an educator. Mazer received her education in New York City at the Fashion Institute of Technology and New York University.

Mazer began her career in 1955 as a retail intern at Lord and Taylor's department store becoming one of the first African Americans to hold a junior executive position at the store. She was a fashion director at Alexander's Department Store and the stylist for Advertising Images, one of the foremost advertising photography studios in New York City.

In 1968 Mazer became the first African American fashion editor at *Harper's Bazaar* creating Bazaar's Bazaar and Lifestyle for the magazine. In 1970, during her tenure at the magazine, she was the co-founder of Narcissa a New York boutique. In 1976 Mazer became the marketing director for Nazareno Gabrielli, an Italian fashion company. She was responsible for opening New York offices and assisting with opening a retail store in Beverly Hills, California.

Mazer then moved to San Francisco, California to join Esprit as creative director. She was responsible for corporate branding, advertising, marketing, and catalogues to create the company's public image. In 1982, Mazer founded Total Image Management, a consulting firm that has provided personal style and corporate image management services for clients such as, Wells Fargo Bank, Campton Place Hotel, and Oprah Winfrey. During this time she also founded the Gwen Mazer Collection, a San Francisco, Union Square boutique offering fine fashion accessories and fashion consulting.

Mazer was an adjunct professor at the Academy of Art University. She has also lectured at the University of California at Berkeley and the City College of San Francisco; led seminars at the Central California Women's

Conference, the Professional Business Women's Conference; and served as a guest speaker at the World Affairs Council, the Commonwealth Club, the Jewish Community Center, and the Francisca Club.

Mazer is a charter member of the Association of Image Consultants International (AICI) and served as president of the San Francisco Chapter from 1995 to 1997. Mazer is a former member of the Women's Professional Network, the New York and San Francisco chapters of the Fashion Group, and the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO). She has served as a board director for the Fort Mason Foundation, the San Francisco Convention Bureau, the Magic Theatre, and currently serves on the board of the International Women's Forum of Northern California.

Mazer was awarded the highest honor in the image industry when she received the IMMIE award for outstanding professionalism and dedication and has received various honors from the city of San Francisco. Mazer is the author of the award winning book *Wise Talk Wild Women* and created the Wise Talk Lecture Series. The Friends and Foundation of the San Francisco Library honored Mazer as a Literary Laureate for her book *Wise Talk, Wild Women*.

Gwen Mazer was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on November 8, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Gwen Mazer was conducted by Larry Crowe on November 8, 2013, in San Francisco, California, and was recorded on 8 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Personal style and image consultant and author Gwen Mazer (1950 -) was the first African American to serve a junior executive at Lord & Taylor department store and as Fashion editor at Harper's Bazaar magazine. She also founded Total Image Management and the Gwen Mazer Collection.

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:

Mazer, Gwen

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Mazer, Gwen--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Personal Style and Image Consultant

Author

HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers|StyleMakers

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 Gwen Mazer, November 8, 2013. 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 Gwen Mazer, Section A2013_256_001_001, TRT: 1:28:02 ?

Gwen Mazer was born on May 23, 1950 in New York City to Edythe Winfrey Goodman and Theodore Goodman. Mazer's maternal great-grandfather, Clayton Johnson, was a traveling minister who originated from Virginia. Her maternal grandfather, Roger Winfrey, purchased farmland in the Williamsbridge neighborhood of the Bronx, New York in 1903. There, he and his wife, Lucy Johnson Winfrey, raised Mazer's mother in a predominately Italian and German community. Mazer's maternal uncle, Sol Winfrey, Sr., graduated from Columbia University in New York City, and became an assistant for famed actress and interior decorator Elsie de Wolfe. Her mother studied at both Hunter College and Bank Street College of Education in New York City, and worked as an early childhood educator. At the time of her death, she was pursuing her doctorate degree at New York University. Mazer's father was born in Richmond, Virginia to Emmeline Rose Goodman and Neverson Goodman. He worked at the U.S. Postal Service, and later became a 9th Degree Mason.

Video Oral History Interview with Gwen Mazer, Section A2013_256_001_002, TRT: 2:29:20 ?

Gwen Mazer and her brother, Theodore R. Goodman, were raised in the Williamsbridge neighborhood of the Bronx, New York. She lived in a dual level home, where her maternal grandparents, Lucy Johnson Winfrey and Roger Winfrey, lived on the first floor and her nuclear family resided on the second floor. As a child, she loved the dinosaurs at the American Museum of Natural History, attended a ballet performance of 'The Firebird' by Igor Stravinsky and watched concerts at Carnegie Hall and Juilliard School of Music. During this time, she also met model Ophelia DeVore. Mazer began her education at P.S. 103 in the Bronx, followed by Evander Childs High School, a private school in New York City. There, she designed her first fashion collection for a class project. Upon graduating, Mazer enrolled at New York's Fashion Institute of Technology. She recalls attending church with her maternal grandparents, where she taught Sunday school lessons until she was sixteen years old.

Video Oral History Interview with Gwen Mazer, Section A2013_256_001_003, TRT: 3:30:11 ?

Gwen Mazer enjoyed listening to music and watching foreign films as a teenager. She graduated from Evander Childs High School in the Bronx, New York, and enrolled at the Fashion Institute of Technology [FIT] in Manhattan, New York. Dissatisfied with the teaching style at FIT, Mazer began taking courses at both Hunter College and New York University [NYU] School of Retailing. There, she was taught by psychology professor Perry George, who was the sister of dancer Agnes de Mille. While studying at NYU, Mazer interned in the jewelry department of a local Lord and Taylor store. She was initially tasked with drawing the jewelry, and was later trained to design displays. Mazer eventually became one of the first African American women elevated to an

executive role there. Then, Mazer transitioned to Alexander's Department Store, where she was hired as a photographer, and later promoted to fashion director in 1960. Mazer and her husband, Ira Mazer, went on to form Advertising Images in New York City.

Video Oral History Interview with Gwen Mazer, Section A2013_256_001_004, TRT: 4:30:02 ?

Gwen Mazer converted to Judaism to marry Ira Mazer. When she completed her studies at the Temple of Emanu-El in New York City, her mother, Edythe Winfrey Goodman, and maternal grandfather, Roger Winfrey, attended her confirmation ceremony to show their support. With her husband, Mazer co-founded Advertising Images in New York City, where she met photographer Hugh Bell. Mazer was prompted by a coworker to meet with Vogue editor-in-chief Diana Vreeland for a potential position with the magazine, but ultimately Mazer was not hired. Instead, she joined Harper's Bazaar as a fashion editor, and created the 'Bazaar's Bazaar' column in 1969. Around this time, she also opened the Narcissa Boutique in New York City. As she traveled Europe for her column, she purchased fabric and unique merchandise that she later sold in her store. Under editor James Brady, Mazer transitioned to the 'Lifestyle' column, and was given the opportunity to interview poet Nikki Giovanni, and sculptor and author Barbara Chase-Riboud.

Video Oral History Interview with Gwen Mazer, Section A2013_256_001_005, TRT: 5:30:20 ?

Gwen Mazer left Harper's Bazaar in the early 1970s, but continued writing for publications like Essence magazine and the Chicago Sun-Times. For the newspaper, she interviewed Jamaica President Michael Manley and dancer Katherine Dunham. At the time, Dunham had started the Dunham Foundation in East St. Louis, Missouri, and was teaching at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois. After this encounter, Mazer accompanied Dunham to Haiti, where she began writing Dunham's biography at her request. While there, Mazer visited the Cap-Haitien commune, and Dunham's Habitation Leclerc in Port-au-Prince. Author Toni Morrison insisted that Mazer publish the biography, and connected her with an agent at MCI Communications Corp. However, Random House Inc. refused to publish the manuscript due to Dunham's lack of popularity. Mazer worked briefly at the clothing company Nazareno Gabrielli before joining Esprit Holdings Limited in San Francisco, California at the invitation of its co-founder Douglas Tompkins.

Video Oral History Interview with Gwen Mazer, Section A2013_256_001_006, TRT: 6:29:01 ?

Gwen Mazer was hired by Douglas Tompkins to be the creative director at Esprit Holdings Limited's office in San Francisco, California. In this role, she casted everyday people as models, and oversaw the photography for the early catalogs. In 1982, Mazer founded Total Image Management in San Francisco to meet the needs of the increasing number of women in business. She consulted clients of all genders on appropriate business attire, and formal business etiquette. In 1986, Mazer opened the Gwen Mazer Collection in San Francisco but was forced to close the boutique after an earthquake in 1989 drove away her tourist clientele. In 1991, she became a wardrobe consultant for Oprah Winfrey through a referral from Essence Magazine editor Susan Taylor. Mazer joined the San Francisco chapter of the Association of Image Consultants International and Sutter-Stockton Garage's board. She also served as a board member for the Magic Theatre and a trustee for the Fort Mason Center for Arts and Culture in San Francisco.

Video Oral History Interview with Gwen Mazer, Section A2013_256_001_007, TRT: 7:31:06 ?

Gwen Mazer served as a professor at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, California, where she taught the history of fashion as well as

introductory fashion and style courses. Mazer's mother, Edythe Winfrey Goodman, died in 2002, and in 2004, she began writing 'Wise Talk: Wild Women' to highlight the personal and professional transitional period for middle-aged women entering into retirement age. Christine Alicino was the photographer for the book, and Mazer conducted interviews with women like broadcast journalist Belva Davis, attorney Beverly Baker-Kelly and Congresswoman Barbara Lee. Upon release, the book received positive reviews. At the time of the interview, Mazer was developing her web site, which included a new blog feature. She talks about her fashion philosophy, and her approach as a fashion consultant. She also describes her future writing projects. Mazer concludes this part of the interview by reflecting upon her life, and her hopes and concerns for the African American community.

Video Oral History Interview with Gwen Mazer, Section A2013_256_001_008, TRT: 8:30:10 ?

Gwen Mazer talks about her family, which consists of her brother, Theodore R. Goodman, and his family. Mazer also reflects upon her legacy, and concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.