

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Shirlee Haizlip

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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>	Haizlip, Shirlee Taylor
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Shirlee Haizlip,
<b>Dates:</b>	November 16, 2013
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2013
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:52:46).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Author Shirlee Haizlip (1937 - ) was the first African American to serve as general manager of a CBS Television affiliate. She also authored several books: <i>The Sweeter the Juice: A Family Memoir in Black and White</i> (1994), <i>In The Garden of Our Dreams: Memoirs of a Marriage</i> (1998), and <i>Finding Grace: Two Sisters and the Search for Meaning Beyond the Color Line</i> (2004). Haizlip was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 16, 2013, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2013_341
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Author Shirlee Taylor Haizlip was born on September 3, 1937 in Stratford, Connecticut. She was one of four children raised by Reverend Julian Augustus Taylor and Margaret Morris Taylor. Haizlip grew up in Ansonia, Connecticut and graduated from Wellesley College with her B.A. degree in 1959. Haizlip then received her M.A. degree in urban planning from Harvard University's School of Urban Design in 1966.

In 1975, Haizlip joined WBNB-TV, a CBS-TV affiliate on the island of St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands where she became the first African American to serve as general manager of a CBS-TV affiliate. From 1981 until 1986, Haizlip served as director of corporate communications for WNET-TV in New York City. In 1989, she was appointed executive director of the National Center for Film and Video Preservation in Los Angeles, California.

Haizlip has authored several books. In *The Sweeter the Juice: A Family Memoir in Black and White* (1994), Haizlip chronicles her family history. Along with her husband, Dr. Harold C. Haizlip, she co-authored *In The Garden of Our Dreams: Memoirs of a Marriage* (1998). Haizlip also authored *Finding Grace: Two Sisters and the Search for Meaning Beyond the Color Line* (2004). In addition, she published book reviews in *The San Francisco Chronicle*; editorial articles in *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times*; and essays in magazines such as *American Legacy* and *American Visions*. Haizlip appeared on many television and radio shows including "The Oprah Winfrey Show," "Larry King Live," "Front Page," "Dateline News," National Public Radio and "20/20 News."

Haizlip served as a member of the board of directors for P.E.N. West and Women in Film. Her memoir, *The Sweeter The Juice*, has won many awards including The Simon Wiesenthal Award and *The New York Times*'s "Notable Book of the Year" award. The University of New Haven awarded Haizlip an Honorary Doctorate of

Humane Letters Degree. When Wellesley College celebrated its 125th anniversary, Haizlip was honored as an “Outstanding Alumna” along with former U.S. Secretary of States Hillary Rodham Clinton and Madeline K. Albright.

Haizlip lives in Los Angeles, California with her husband, Dr. Harold C. Haizlip. They have two daughters.

Shirlee Taylor Haizlip was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on November 16, 2013.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Shirlee Haizlip was conducted by Larry Crowe on November 16, 2013, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Author Shirlee Haizlip (1937 - ) was the first African American to serve as general manager of a CBS Television affiliate. She also authored several books: *The Sweeter the Juice: A Family Memoir in Black and White* (1994), *In The Garden of Our Dreams: Memoirs of a Marriage* (1998), and *Finding Grace: Two Sisters and the Search for Meaning Beyond the Color Line* (2004).

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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:

Haizlip, Shirlee Taylor

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Haizlip, Shirlee Taylor--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:

Author

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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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 Shirlee Haizlip, November 16, 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).

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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 Shirlee Haizlip, Section A2013\_341\_001\_001, TRT: 1:29:01 ?

Shirlee Haizlip was born on September 3, 1937 in Stratford, Connecticut to Margaret Morris Taylor and Julian Taylor, Sr. Haizlip's maternal lineage was traced to 15th century American settlers of Irish, Scotch and English descent. One of her maternal ancestors was James Dandridge Halyburton, the judge who swore in Confederacy President Jefferson Davis. After the untimely death of Haizlip's grandmother, Rosalind Scott Morris, Haizlip's mother was placed in the care of various people, including a next door neighbor and cousin. Haizlip's paternal grandfather, William A. Taylor, was a minister who fled Wilmington, North Carolina to avoid a race riot. He moved his family to Washington, D.C., where he taught at Howard University School of Divinity. Haizlip's father attended Washington, D.C.'s Paul Laurence Dunbar High School and Howard University School of Divinity. He then met and married Haizlip's mother, and moved to Ansonia, Connecticut during the 1930s, where he pastored Macedonia Baptist Church.

Video Oral History Interview with Shirlee Haizlip, Section A2013\_341\_001\_002, TRT: 2:29:30 ?

Shirlee Haizlip's father, Julian Taylor, Sr., was the pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church in Ansonia, Connecticut. After three of his members drowned at a local pond, he sought to desegregate the Young Women Christian's Association (YWCA) so that his members could learn to swim. Later, Haizlip's father also founded the local chapter of the NAACP to help a church member who was falsely accused of raping a white woman. In his spare time, he taught his congregation to read and write, and led revivals in Washington, D.C. and the Carolinas, where Haizlip experienced segregation for the first time. As a child, Haizlip took piano lessons in New Haven, Connecticut, and was a member of the Girl Scouts. In Ansonia, she attended Willis School and Ansonia High School. There, she was an honors student, and attended the Columbia Scholastic Press Association conferences in New York City each year. After graduating in 1955, she enrolled at Wellesley College. She describes her older sister, movie star Mauryne Taylor Brent.

Video Oral History Interview with Shirlee Haizlip, Section A2013\_341\_001\_003, TRT: 3:29:05 ?

Shirlee Haizlip majored in sociology at Wellesley College, where her classmates included Judge Amalya Lyle Kears. After graduating, Haizlip married Harold Haizlip, and went to work as an editorial director at the medical journal 'Annals of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology' before becoming the special assistant to the director of the Boys' Clubs of Boston, Inc. in Boston, Massachusetts. From there, she accepted a teaching fellowship at Tufts University in Medford, Connecticut, where she also took graduate courses. Then, she entered the urban design program at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. In 1965, her family moved to New York City, where she worked with socialite Sharman Douglas in Mayor John Lindsay's office of special events. There, she hosted Asantehene Opoku Ware at the opening of the Hall of Man exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History. Haizlip also describes her maternal distant relative, William Montague Cobb, and her husband's cousin, Ellis Haizlip, the creator of the TV series 'Soul!'

Video Oral History Interview with Shirlee Haizlip, Section A2013\_341\_001\_004, TRT: 4:28:16 ?

Shirlee Haizlip moved to St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands when her husband, Harold Haizlip, was appointed commissioner of education for the territory. She became a production assistant at a local, black-owned CBS station. In 1975, she developed the local programming for the station following her promotion to general manager. In 1981, her family returned to the U.S.

mainland, and after a brief period in Connecticut, moved to New York City, where Haizlip joined WNET-TV as the director of corporate communications. In 1989, the change in administration at WNET-TV forced Haizlip to search for new opportunities. She was then hired as the national director of the National Center for Film and Video Preservation at the American Film Institute [AFI] in Los Angeles, California. While there, the AFI published the catalog *Within Our Gates: Ethnicity in American Feature Films, 1911-1960*. As a present to her mother, Margaret Morris Taylor, for her eightieth birthday, Haizlip began researching her family history.

Video Oral History Interview with Shirlee Haizlip, Section A2013\_341\_001\_005, TRT: 5:28:32 ?

Shirlee Haizlip's mother, Margaret Morris Taylor, knew little of her family history, as she was raised by strangers after the death of her mother, Rosalind Scott Morris. In researching her mother's family background, Haizlip learned that her maternal great-great-great-grandfather was James Dandridge Halyburton, a famed white judge who swore in Confederacy President Jefferson Davis during the American Civil War. Haizlip hired a private detective to find her mother's missing family, and discovered her maternal aunt, Grace Morris Cramer, had been raised by an older uncle, Sumner Morris. Haizlip met her maternal aunt, who had passed as white, and her grandchildren in Anaheim, California. Haizlip documented her journey in her book *'The Sweeter the Juice: A Memoir in Black and White.'* Soon after, Haizlip began working on a new writing project, *"Finding Grace: Two Sisters and the Search for Meaning Beyond the Color Line,"* inspired by the letters received from readers about passing and racial identity.

Video Oral History Interview with Shirlee Haizlip, Section A2013\_341\_001\_006, TRT: 6:28:22 ?

Shirlee Haizlip was the author of the critically acclaimed *'The Sweeter the Juice: A Memoir in Black and White.'* She was interviewed on *'The Oprah Winfrey Show'* three times, and her first appearance was one of the most watched episodes of the series run. In 2004, Haizlip published *'Finding Grace,'* a follow up book about her mother, Margaret Morris Taylor, and her maternal aunt, Grace Morris Cramer, meeting for the first time. It also contained stories sent to her after the first book's release. In addition, Haizlip and her husband, Harold Haizlip, wrote a memoir about their marriage called *'In the Garden of Our Dreams.'* Together, the couple had two daughters, Deirdre Haizlip Celotto and Melissa Haizlip. She talks about her future writing projects, and shares her concerns for the African American community as well as a message to future generations. Haizlip also reflects upon her life legacy, and how she would like to be remembered. Haizlip concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.