

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Woodie King, Jr.

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	King, Woodie
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Woodie King, Jr.,
Dates:	April 18, 2003
Bulk Dates:	2003
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:15:48).
Abstract:	Stage director and theater director Woodie King, Jr. (1937 -) is an award-winning theater director who founded the New Federal Theatre and the National Black Touring Circuit in New York City. King also writes theater critiques for several magazines. King was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 18, 2003, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2003_083
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Award winning theater director Woodie King, Jr., was born on July 27, 1937, in Baldwin Springs, Alabama, to parents Ruby and Woodie King, Sr. Attending high school in Detroit, King graduated in 1956; he then went on to attend Leman College in New York, and later earned his M.F.A. degree from Brooklyn College.

Following his high school graduation in 1956, King worked for Ford Motor Company as an arc welder for the three years. In 1959, King went to work for the city of Detroit as a draftsman. In 1965, King joined Mobilization for Youth, where he spent the next five years working as the cultural director.

In 1970, King founded the New Federal Theatre and the National Black Touring Circuit in New York City, where he remained as producing director throughout his career. King produced shows both on and off Broadway, and directed performances across the country in venues such as the New York Shakespeare Festival; the Cleveland Playhouse; Center Stage of Baltimore; and the Pittsburgh Public Theatre. King's work earned him numerous nominations and awards over the years, including a 1988 NAACP Image Award for his direction of *Checkmates*, and 1993 Audelco Awards for Best Director and Best Play for his production of *Robert Johnson: Trick The Devil*; he also received an Obie Award for Sustained Achievement. King was awarded an honorary doctorate in humane letters from Wayne State University, and a doctorate of fine arts from the College of Wooster.

In addition to his directing and producing of theater, King wrote extensively about the theater industry; he contributed to numerous magazines, such as *Black World*, *Variety*, and *The Tulane Drama Review*, as well as authoring a number of books.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Woodie King, Jr. was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 18, 2003, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Stage director and theater director Woodie King, Jr. (1937 -) is an award-winning theater director who founded the New Federal Theatre and the National Black Touring Circuit in New York City. King also writes theater critiques for several magazines.

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:

King, Woodie

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

King, Woodie--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

National Black Touring Circuit, Inc.

New Federal Theatre (Theatrical troupe)

Occupations:

Stage Director

Theater Director

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 Woodie King, Jr., April 18, 2003. 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 Woodie King, Jr., Section A2003_083_001_001, TRT: 0:28:30 ?
Woodie King details his childhood from growing up in Alabama to moving to Detroit at the age of ten. He describes the turmoil in his life due to his father's alcoholism and his parents' divorce. Once in Detroit, King discusses his

schooling and his involvement in street gangs during the 1950s. After describing his first job at Ford Motor Company, King explains his first interest in the theater arts, seeing them as a way out of his undesirable job at Ford.

Video Oral History Interview with Woodie King, Jr., Section A2003_083_001_002, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Woodie King, Jr. briefly discusses his drama school experience at Brooklyn College in New York City. King details his early years in off-Broadway theater with companies like the Negro Ensemble, and the launching of the New Federal Theatre Company, sharing stories of his career as an actor and director. King shares his thoughts on the difficulties of getting black-themed plays on stage due to changes in theater ownership and revenue agreements.

Video Oral History Interview with Woodie King, Jr., Section A2003_083_001_003, TRT: 0:29:40 ?

Woodie King, Jr. discusses how plays written by African Americans are received overseas, and compares the African American experience with the South African struggle against apartheid. King then discusses contemporary black theater and talks about influential figures like Abena Joan Brown. King explains how the struggle for finances means that a successful theater must have a successful business plan, and details some of his own strategies. Finally, King shares his views on community theater.

Video Oral History Interview with Woodie King, Jr., Section A2003_083_001_004, TRT: 0:30:55 ?

Woodie King, Jr. shares his philosophy of creating African American centered theater, and discusses the challenges he faces to maintain an original vision. King reflects on his career in theater, naming some of his most successful plays and talking about his plans for future projects. He also discusses his hopes and concerns for the black community and considers his legacy. King then narrates his personal photos as they are recorded on videotape.

Video Oral History Interview with Woodie King, Jr., Section A2003_083_001_005, TRT: 0:17:03 ?

Woodie King, Jr. narrates his personal photos as they are recorded on videotape.