

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Ferne Yangyeitie Caulker

PERSON

Caulker, Ferne Yangyeitie, 1947-

**Alternative Names:** Ferne Yangyeitie Caulker;

**Life Dates:** August 9, 1947-

**Place of Birth:** Sierra Leone

**Residence:** Brown Deer, WI

**Work:** Milwaukee, WI

**Occupations:** Dancer; Choreographer;

## Biographical Note

Dancer and choreographer Ferne Yangyeitie Caulker was born on August 9, 1947, in Sierra Leone, Africa. Caulker studied with the National Dance Company of Ghana at the University of Ghana, Legon, then returned to the United States.

In 1969, Caulker founded the Ko-Thi Dance Company after returning from Ghana. The company was created to develop, educate, showcase and preserve African, Caribbean and African American dance and music. In the beginning, the company's entire repertoire was created by Caulker. However, through the years, she developed and nurtured veteran choreographer/dancers and musicians who now contribute into the repertoire. Over the past thirty years, Caulker has developed a cadre of commissioned works by master dancers and musicians from throughout the African Diaspora.

Caulker began teaching at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 1971, creating the University's first courses covering African, Caribbean and African American dance technique and history. Caulker then became a full professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Dance Department.

Since 1981, Caulker and the Ko-Thi Dance Company have created major full length evening works, collaborating with various international artists from across world cultures, (East Indian, Irish), and cross disciplines, (Jazz and the spoken word), merging cross cultural forms such as the South African 'Boot Dance' and Tap. In 1995, Caulker received a Fulbright Research Fellowship, which allowed her to study in Tanzania, East Africa, for three months. While doing her own research, Caulker also taught at the University of Dar es Salaam, lectured children in the Arusha United African American

Cultural Center and assisted a UWASA cultural group. In 1999, Caulker served on the Blue Ribbon Commission on the Arts in Education for the Wisconsin State Superintendent, and the following year, served for the National Endowment for the Arts 2000 Dance panel. She has proudly served on the Board of Directors of the Wisconsin Arts Board.

## Related Entries

**Custer High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Annie Walsh Memorial School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**West Cornwall School for Girls** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**University of Wisconsin-Madison** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Ko-Thi Dance Company** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Founder**