

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Whoopi Goldberg

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Goldberg, Whoopi, 1955-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Whoopi Goldberg,
Dates:	October 5, 2016
Bulk Dates:	2016
Physical Description:	2 uncompressed MOV digital video files (1:24:40).
Abstract:	Actress and comedian Whoopi Goldberg (1955 -) was the first African American to receive all four Emmy, Grammy, Tony, and Oscar awards. Goldberg was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 5, 2016, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2016_051
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Actress and comedian Whoopi Goldberg was born Caryn Elaine Johnson on November 13, 1955 in Manhattan, New York to Emma Harris Johnson and Robert James Johnson. Goldberg's mother raised her as a single parent in the Chelsea-Eliot Houses public housing project. Goldberg attended St. Columba Catholic School in Chelsea, New York and Washington Irving High School.

Goldberg studied with theater teacher Uta Hagen at HB Studio in New York City during the 1970s before moving to Berkeley, California, where she performed with the Blake Street Hawkeyes, an experimental theater group. In the early 1980s, Goldberg began developing *The Spook Show*, a one-woman series of character monologues. She eventually took the show to the Dance Theater Workshop in New York, where director Mike Nichols asked her to perform on Broadway. Renamed *Whoopi Goldberg*, the show with Goldberg caught the eye of Steven Spielberg during its 1984 to 1985 run, who cast her in the starring role of Celie in the 1985 film adaptation of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, earning her an Academy Award nomination for Best Actress. Goldberg went on to appear in the 1990 film *Ghost*, for which she won the Golden Globe and Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress. In 1992, Goldberg starred as Sister Mary Clarence in *Sister Act*, reprising her role in the 1993 film *Sister Act 2: Back in the Habit*. The highest paid actress at the time, Goldberg went on to appear in *The Long Walk Home* (1990), *Ghosts of Mississippi* (1990), the South African film *Sarafina!* (1992), *Made in America* (1993), *The Lion King* (1994), *Eddie* (1996), *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* (1998) and *Girl, Interrupted*. From 1998 to 2002, Goldberg executive produced and appeared on the popular game show, *Hollywood Squares*. A lifelong *Star Trek* fan, Goldberg appeared in the recurring role of Guinan on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Goldberg has authored numerous bestselling books for children and adults, including *Book* and the *Sugar Plum Ballerinas* series. In 2007, Goldberg became a moderator on the morning talk show *The View* alongside Barbara Walters, Joy Behar, Sherri Shepherd, and Elizabeth Hasselbeck. She has continued acting throughout the 2000s and 2010s, appearing in films such as *For Colored Girls* (2010), *Big Stone Gap* (2014), and *Nobody's Fool* (2018). She has produced numerous projects for television and stage.

Goldberg has received Emmy, Grammy, Tony, and Oscar awards, making her the first African American to receive all four awards. In 2017, she was named a Disney legend by the Walt Disney Company.

Goldberg has one daughter, three grandchildren, and one great grandchild.

Whoopi Goldberg was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on October 5, 2016.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Whoopi Goldberg was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on October 5, 2016, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 2 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Actress and comedian Whoopi Goldberg (1955 -) was the first African American to receive all four Emmy, Grammy, Tony, and Oscar awards.

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:

Goldberg, Whoopi, 1955-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Goldberg, Whoopi, 1955---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Actress

Comedian

HistoryMakers® Category:

EntertainmentMakers

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 Whoopi Goldberg, October 5, 2016. 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 Whoopi Goldberg, Section A2016_051_001_001, TRT: 1:30:14
?

Whoopi Goldberg was born on November 13, 1955 in New York City to Emma Harris Johnson and Robert Johnson. Her maternal grandfather, whom Goldberg hardly knew, was acquainted with Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba. Goldberg grew up in New York City's Chelsea neighborhood. When she was eight years old, her mother had a nervous breakdown, and was hospitalized for three years. During this time, Goldberg lived with her father and his boyfriend. She struggled from dyslexia at St. Columba Catholic School, and left Washington Irving High School before graduating. Goldberg aspired to act from an early age. She trained with actress Vinnette Justine Carroll and theatre practitioner Lee Strasberg, and her mother encouraged her to attend lectures at local museums. As a teenager, Goldberg began to abuse heroin, and went to a rehabilitation program at Horizon House. There, she met Alvin Martin, whom she married. They had a daughter, Alex Martin, and soon divorced. Goldberg then moved to San Diego, California.

Video Oral History Interview with Whoopi Goldberg, Section A2016_051_001_002, TRT: 2:54:26
?

Whoopi Goldberg performed with the San Diego Repertory Company for seven years, and then moved to San Francisco, California with the Blake Street Hawkeyes theater collective. During this time, she began writing solo character shows. She married Dave Schein, and together they travelled clandestinely to East Germany to perform. There, she was inspired to create the character Fontaine, whom she later performed in 'The Spook Show' at New York City's Dance Theater Workshop. Producer Mike Nichols was in the audience, and brought the show to Broadway. Then, Goldberg wrote to Alice Walker, hoping to be cast in director Steven Spielberg's film adaptation of 'The Color Purple.' Spielberg invited her to perform 'The Spook Show' at his theater, and subsequently offered her the lead role of Celie. It was Goldberg's first movie role, and catapulted her to fame. Goldberg talks about her upcoming projects, and why she agreed to be interviewed. She concludes the interview by reflecting upon her life and legacy.