

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Martha Brock-Leftridge

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Brock-Leftridge, Martha, 1958-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Martha Brock-Leftridge,
Dates:	September 24, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:43:04).
Abstract:	Photographer Martha Brock-Leftridge (1958 -) founded Martha Brock Photography in 1992. One of Chicago's most published African American photographers, she was also a founder of the Chicago Alliance of African American Photographers. Brock-Leftridge was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 24, 2006, in Oak Park, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_105
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Photographer Martha Gean Brock was born on September 19, 1958, in Isola, Mississippi, to Dorothy Amos Brock and Herman Brock. She attended segregated schools in Iverness and Belzoni, Mississippi, graduating in 1976 from the then integrated Humphries County High School. She was taught photography by Floyd Bailey at Mississippi Valley State University, where she was photographer and editor of the college yearbook. Graduating in 1980 with her B.S. degree in criminal justice, Brock relocated to Chicago where she later completed her M.B.A. degree from the University of Phoenix in 2006.

Initially working in the corporate world, Brock's interest in photography was rekindled in the mid-1980s as her friends and colleagues recognized her talent. Ignoring criticism for shooting with a Minolta 5000 Max, Brock's knack for capturing celebrities has made her one of Chicago's most published African American photographers. Trusting her instincts about where to be and when to be there, Brock's photographs of Alicia Keys, R. Kelly, Luther Vandross, Rosa Parks, Bill Clinton, Barack Obama, Oprah Winfrey, Patti LaBelle, Stevie Wonder, Queen Latifah, Debra Winger, Ice-T, Jerry Springer, Whoopi Goldberg, and Michael Jordan, among hundreds of others, have appeared in various print media, including: the *Chicago Defender*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *USA Today*, *Today's Chicago Woman*, *Jet*, *Ebony*, *Essence*, *N'Digo*, *Sister 2 Sister*, *Upscale*, and *Vibe* magazines. Brock established Martha Brock Photography in 1992, where she specializes in celebrity, commercial, fashion, special events, and public relations photography. Her photographs of current events are featured on the websites of Chicago's WVAZ, WGCI, and WPWX radio stations. Some of her other clients include J Records, R. Kelly Jive Records, Chicago Housing Authority, The Boys and Girls Clubs, and T.D. Jakes Ministries.

Brock is a member of the National Association of Black Journalists, the Chicago Association of Black Journalists and the National Association of Women Executives. As a founder of the Chicago Alliance of African American Photographers (CAAAP), Brock's work is featured in CAAAP's first book, *The Journey: The Next Hundred Years*.

One of her most popular photographs is a candid portrait of Michael Jordan, shot in the Chicago Bulls' Berto Center in 1996. Volunteering in Chicago area schools, Brock's community involvement led to her election to the Trustee Board of Oak Park, Illinois, in 2005. Always with a knack for being in the right place, Brock appeared in a photo along side Oprah Winfrey in the *Guinness Book of World Records*.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Martha Brock-Leftridge was conducted by Larry Crowe on September 24, 2006, in Oak Park, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Photographer Martha Brock-Leftridge (1958 -) founded Martha Brock Photography in 1992. One of Chicago's most published African American photographers, she was also a founder of the Chicago Alliance of African American Photographers.

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:

Brock-Leftridge, Martha, 1958-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Brock-Leftridge, Martha, 1958- --Interviews

African American photographers--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

Women photographers--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Photographer

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 Martha Brock-Leftridge, September 24, 2006. 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 Martha Brock-Leftridge, Section A2006_105_001_001, TRT: 0:28:37 ?

Martha Brock-Leftridge was born September 9, 1958 to Dorothy Amos Brock and Herman Brock, Sr. in Isola, Mississippi. Her mother was born in Silent Shade, Mississippi, and was raised by an adoptive family. An avid reader, Brock-Leftridge's mother graduated from high school, and briefly attended college. Later in life, she was reluctant to share her family history with Brock-Leftridge, although she sometimes visited a relative who worked a photographer in Memphis, Tennessee. Brock-Leftridge's father was born in 1925 in Tchula, Mississippi. He was close to his mother, who belonged to the Church of God in Christ. Brock-Leftridge's parents worked as cotton sharecroppers in Caile, Mississippi, where they raised fifteen children, including Brock-Leftridge. In the early 1970s, Brock-Leftridge moved with her family to a farm in Belzoni, Mississippi. Her paternal grandfather was lynched when she was a child, but she did not learn of the circumstances until adulthood.

African American photographers--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Women photographers--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Martha Brock-Leftridge, Section A2006_105_001_002, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Martha Brock-Leftridge was initially raised on a farm in Caile, Mississippi. She began her schooling in Inverness, Mississippi, and later moved with her family to Belzoni, Mississippi. There, a family friend introduced her to photography, teaching her to use a 35mm Canon camera. During this time, Brock-Leftridge's father, Herman Brock, Sr., always carried photographs of her in his wallet. He worked as a brick mason, while her mother managed a large group of cotton pickers, including Brock-Leftridge and her fourteen siblings. In Belzoni, Brock-Leftridge was sexually abused by her male relatives; and, as a result of the trauma, bullied her classmates at the segregated O.M. McNair Elementary School. Although the community in Belzoni was segregated until the mid-1970s, Brock-Leftridge attended the integrated Humphreys County High School from the seventh grade. She also remembers the few shops in Belzoni where African Americans were welcome, such as the Lin Yin Food Mart.

Video Oral History Interview with Martha Brock-Leftridge, Section A2006_105_001_003, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Martha Brock-Leftridge grew up in Belzoni, Mississippi, where her parents raised produce on a small farm. She attended Belzoni's Humphreys County High School, where she was influenced by her biology teacher, Miss Bromfield. After the school was integrated, many of the white students transferred to private schools like the Humphreys Academy. Brock-Leftridge graduated in 1976, and enrolled at the Mississippi Valley State University in Itta Bena. She majored in criminal justice at the request of her mother, who wanted her to become a lawyer; and decided to minor in sociology. During her first year, Brock-Leftridge learned basic camerawork from photographer Floyd Bailey. She went on to photograph the sophomore class and the school fashion show for her college yearbook, where she served as editor in chief. She also participated in student government. During this time, Brock-Leftridge was sexually assaulted by another student on campus, and was pressured by his parents not to press charges.

Video Oral History Interview with Martha Brock-Leftridge, Section A2006_105_001_004, TRT: 0:29:18 ?

Martha Brock-Leftridge attended the Mississippi Valley State University in Itta Bena, and participated in a voter registration drive on campus led by Reverend Jesse L. Jackson. Upon graduating in 1980, Brock-Leftridge moved to Oak Park, Illinois, where she lived with two of her sisters. She moved to Brentwood, Missouri in 1985; and, in 1986, returned to Oak Park to manage her sister's healthcare agency in Chicago, Illinois. Then, Brock-Leftridge was given her first professional camera by her sister, and began developing a photography portfolio. As her work progressed, Brock-Leftridge's portfolio was shared with the black news media by Whitney Houston's publicist, Regina Brown Daniels, as well as radio host Art Chat Daddy Sims. Soon, Brock-Leftridge was hired by Chicago's WGCI Radio, where she worked as a photographer for thirteen years. In 2005, Brock-Leftridge was elected to Oak Park's Village Board. She describes the impetus behind her campaign, including the racial gap in achievement at Oak Park's schools.

Video Oral History Interview with Martha Brock-Leftridge, Section A2006_105_001_005, TRT: 0:28:42 ?

Martha Brock-Leftridge became a professional photographer in the early 1990s, and photographed basketball player Michael Jordan after the Chicago Bulls' victory at the 1996 NBA Finals. She joined the Chicago Association of Black Journalists in 1998; and, with Milbert O. Brown, Jr., helped found the Chicago Alliance of African American Photographers in 1999, later contributing to the organization's photo documentary project, 'The Journey.' She also made numerous appearances on 'The Oprah Winfrey Show' from 1984 to 2003, as both an audience member and a guest. Brock-Leftridge served as a trustee of the Village Board in Oak Park from 2005; and, at the time of the interview, continued to reside in Oak Park, Illinois. There, she developed two youth programs, Time Out Two and the Neutral Ground Program, which connected black professionals with students at Oak Park and River Forest High School. She reflects upon her life, and her hopes and concerns for the black community.

Video Oral History Interview with Martha Brock-Leftridge, Section A2006_105_001_006, TRT: 0:17:47 ?

Martha Brock-Leftridge created a photo documentary about musical artist R. Kelly during the early 2000s. For two years, she documented his life in photographs, including his attendance at the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah. Brock-Leftridge had no children at the time of the interview, but was an aunt to seventy nieces and nephews, whom she hoped would help preserve her photography collection in an archive. She reflects upon her legacy, and how she would like to be remembered. Brock-Leftridge concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.