

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Julie Dash

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Dash, Julie
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Julie Dash,
Dates:	November 20, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:09:36).
Abstract:	Filmmaker Julie Dash (1952 -) was the first African American woman to have a full-length general theatrical release in the United States with her film from 1991, 'Daughters of the Dust,' which the Library of Congress placed on the National Film Registry in 2004. Dash was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 20, 2006, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_147
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Writer, producer, and director Julie Ethel Dash was born on October 22, 1952, in Manhattan, New York, to Rhudine Henderson and Charles Edward Dash. After graduating from Jamaica High School, Dash received her B.A. degree in film production from City Colleges of New York in 1974, and her M.F.A. degree in film and television at the University of California Los Angeles. Prior to receiving her M.F.A. degree, Dash was a two year Conservatory Fellow (Producing/Writing) at the American Film Institute's Center for Advanced Film Studies.

Dash began her study of film in 1969 at the Studio Museum of Harlem's Cinematography Workshop, with a special interest in foreign film. She was then accepted into film school at the Leonard Davis Center for the Performing Arts, where she wrote and produced a promotional documentary for the New York Urban Coalition called *Working Models for Success*. After Dash graduated, she moved to Los Angeles and attended the Center for Advanced Film Studies and the American Film Institute. In 1975, Dash directed *Four Women*, a "choreopoem" based on the song of the same title by singer Nina Simone. In 1977, Dash directed the film, *Diary of an African Nun*, which was shown at the Los Angeles Film Exposition and won her a Director's Guild Award for student filmmaking.

In 1983, Dash directed *Illusions*, a short film about a young African American woman passing for a white executive assistant in 1940s Hollywood. The film won her the 1989 Jury's prize for Best Film of the Decade by the Black Filmmaker Foundation.

Dash received her highest acclaim for the 1991 film, *Daughters of the Dust*, an original story and screenplay. The release of the film marked Dash as the first African American woman to have a full-length general theatrical release in the United States. In 1999, the 25th annual Newark Black Film Festival honored *Daughters of the Dust* as being one of the most important cinematic achievements in black cinema in the 20th century. In 2004, The

Library of Congress placed *Daughters of the Dust* on the National Film Registry. This distinguished film joined 400 other American-made films that are being preserved and protected as National Treasures.

Dash's novel, *Daughters of the Dust* was published by Dutton Books in 1997. The novel is the continuing story of the Peazant family from the movie, and Dash wanted to have the novel titled *Geechee Recollections*. When going to press, however, the publisher chose to go with the well-known title from the original movie.

Dash has directed music videos, television commercial spots, shorts, and long form movies for cable and network television including the NAACP award-winning CBS network television movie, *The Rosa Parks Story*, *Funny Valentines*, *Love Song*, *Incognito* and “Sax Cantor Riff,” a segment of HBO’s *SUBWAYStories: Tales from the Underground*. She has directed music videos for music artists including Raphael Saadiq; Tony, Toni, Tone; Keb ‘Mo; Peabo Bryson; Adriana Evans; Sweet Honey in the Rock; and Tracey Chapman’s “Give Me One More Reason”.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Julie Dash was conducted by Paul Brock on November 20, 2006, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Filmmaker Julie Dash (1952 -) was the first African American woman to have a full-length general theatrical release in the United States with her film from 1991, 'Daughters of the Dust,' which the Library of Congress placed on the National Film Registry in 2004.

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:

Dash, Julie

Brock, Paul (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Dash, Julie--Interviews

African American women motion picture producers and directors--Interviews

African American women authors--Interviews

African American television producers and directors--Interviews

Women television producers and directors--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Filmmaker

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 Julie Dash, November 20, 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 Julie Dash, Section A2006_147_001_001, TRT: 0:27:20 ?

Julie Dash was born on October 22, 1952 to Rhudine Henderson Dash and Charles Edward Dash in New York City. Dash's paternal family included journalist Leon DeCosta Dash, singer Sarah Dash and actress Stacey Dash. They traced their ancestry to seven brothers, who were brought to South Carolina from Barbados as slaves. In 1865, Dash's great-great-grandmother, Rosa Brown, was freed from slavery at thirteen years old. Dash's paternal great-grandmother, Emma Atkins Dash, grew up on a plantation outside of Charleston, South Carolina. Dash's paternal grandparents, Ethel Capers Dash and Charles St. Lucian Dash, were born in Charleston, as was her father in 1917. Dash's maternal grandmother, Irene Henderson Carmichael, married twice, and had five children, including Dash's mother, who was born in 1918 in Union, South Carolina. Dash also describes the story of her own birth, when her parents' cab driver feared that her mother would deliver in his taxi, and failed to bring them to their destination.

African American women motion picture producers and directors--Interviews.

African American women authors--Interviews.

African American television producers and directors--Interviews.

Women television producers and directors--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Julie Dash, Section A2006_147_001_002, TRT: 0:29:00 ?

Julie Dash's mother, Rhudine Henderson Dash, graduated summa cum laude from Sims High School in Union, South Carolina. Dash had six paternal uncles, including tenor saxophonist St. Julian Bennett Dash, who played with Erskine Hawkins and His Orchestra. In the 1940s, Dash's parents met in New York City, where her father was a shipping clerk, and her mother worked as a domestic on Long Island. They raised Dash and her older sister, Charlene Dash, in the Queensbridge Houses in Queens, New York. After Dash graduated from P.S. 111 and then I.S. 204, she attended Jamaica High School on a scholarship from the College Discovery program. She aspired to become a gym teacher, until enrolling in a cinematography workshop at the Studio Museum in Harlem, where she developed an interest in film. Additionally, Dash remembers visiting her paternal grandparents in Charleston, South Carolina, where her great-great-grandmother and other relatives were buried in the Humane and Friendly Society Cemetery.

Video Oral History Interview with Julie Dash, Section A2006_147_001_003, TRT: 0:29:21 ?

Julie Dash attended a cinematography workshop at New York City's Studio

Museum in Harlem during the late 1960s. Her instructors included the museum's director, Ed Spriggs. Through her coursework, Dash was introduced to foreign films and documentary filmmaking, and learned to use production equipment. Inspired by Frank Silvera's Writer's Workshop and Barbara Ann Teer's National Black Theatre, her early films documented the political unrest in New York City, including the Young Lords' takeover of the First Spanish United Methodist Church in 1969. Upon graduating from Jamaica High School in Queens, Dash enrolled in the film program at the City College of New York. She later moved to Los Angeles, California to pursue her studies at the American Film Institute's Center for Advanced Film Studies at Greystone, and then at the University of California, Los Angeles. After earning her M.F.A. degree, Dash showed 'Four Women' and 'The Diary of an African Nun' at international film festivals.

Video Oral History Interview with Julie Dash, Section A2006_147_001_004, TRT: 0:28:40 ?

Julie Dash aspired to become a filmmaker after attending cinematography classes at New York City's Studio Museum in Harlem. She graduated from the film program at the City College of New York, and went on to attend the Center for Advanced Film Studies at Greystone in Los Angeles, California. There, Dash created a choreopoem adaptation of Nina Simone's song, 'Four Women'; and began developing a film set in the Sea Islands of South Carolina, which became 'Daughters of the Dust.' Then, Dash enrolled at the University of California, Los Angeles, where she first attracted the interest of Hollywood production studios with the film 'Illusions.' In 1988, American Playhouse agreed to finance 'Daughters of the Dust' after viewing a ten-minute trailer of the movie at the Sundance Film Festival. Dash originally conceived of the movie as a silent film, but incorporated sound to appease the production studio. She reflects upon the process of creating 'Daughters of the Dust,' and the response from its audience.

Video Oral History Interview with Julie Dash, Section A2006_147_001_005, TRT: 0:15:15 ?

Julie Dash was among the directors of the film 'Subway Stories' in 1997. Composed of vignettes, the movie was based on New York City residents' stories about their experiences on the subway. Each vignette was directed by a different filmmaker, all of whom were New York City natives. Dash was offered the position by actress Rosie Perez, and chose to direct a story about a confrontation between a Jewish woman and three black girls. However, much of the story was cut during post-production to lessen the film's focus on race. Dash shares her opinion of the Hollywood film industry, which she found exclusive and restrictive; and talks about the opportunities for emerging filmmakers, and the importance of independent filmmaking. Dash also reflects upon how she would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Julie Dash, Section A2006_147_Dash_Julie_06_MED_001, TRT: