

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Marion Anderson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Anderson, Marion, 1926-2015
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Marion Anderson,
Dates:	June 29, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:50:13).
Abstract:	Master tailor and tailoring instructor Marion Anderson (1926 - 2015) was the first person to teach tailoring at New York public schools and was the director and founder of the Manhattanville Needle Trade School in New York, New York. Anderson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 29, 2007, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_193
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Master tailor and tailoring instructor Marion William Anderson was born to Ethel and William Anderson on April 18, 1926, in Charleston, South Carolina. Ethel Anderson was a beautician and William Anderson was a presser. Anderson's mother encouraged him to pursue a trade at Burke Industrial High School in Charleston. In 1947, after serving the U.S. Army in Asia for a few months, he graduated from high school, majoring in tailoring. In 1949, Anderson moved to Harlem, New York, in order to look for work. After a few jobs in industrial tailoring, Anderson pursued a teaching career.

After refining his skills at the American Gentleman School of Designing, he started teaching at the Empire Trade School, a school that catered to African American World War II veterans. In 1956, Anderson began instructing prisoners in the tailor shop on Rikers Island. Four years later, he convinced the New York City Board of Education to create a tailoring curriculum, and he was hired at Sterling High School in Brooklyn, New York, where he would teach tailoring for thirty-three years. Anderson was the first African-American to be licensed by the City of New York to teach tailoring.

In 1987, Anderson founded his own school, the Manhattanville Needle Trade School, in Harlem. In 2007, Anderson celebrated his twentieth year as the director at the school. During his lengthy career, he tailored suits for many members of the Harlem elite, and taught a valuable trade to hundreds in Harlem and New York City.

Anderson passed away on February 14, 2015 at age 88.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Marion Anderson was conducted by Adrienne Jones on June 29, 2007, in New

York, New York, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Master tailor and tailoring instructor Marion Anderson (1926 - 2015) was the first person to teach tailoring at New York public schools and was the director and founder of the Manhattanville Needle Trade School in New York, New York.

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:

Anderson, Marion, 1926-2015

Jones, Adrienne (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Anderson, Marion, 1926-2015 --Interviews

African American fashion designers--Interviews.

African American educators--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Master Tailor

Tailoring Instructor

HistoryMakers® Category:

StyleMakers

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 Marion Anderson, June 29, 2007. 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 Marion Anderson, Section A2007_193_001_001, TRT: 0:30:16
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Marion Anderson was born on April 18, 1926 in Charleston, South Carolina to Ethel Anderson and William Anderson. Anderson's paternal family came from the Liberty Hill section of Charleston, where his grandfather ran a grocery store.

Anderson initially lived with his family in Liberty Hill, and later moved closer to the center of Charleston. There, his father owned a dry cleaning business, the Okay Pressing Club; and his mother operated a beauty shop, while raising Anderson and his two younger siblings. In Charleston, Anderson attended Henry P. Archer Elementary School and Burke Industrial School. His mother encouraged him to learn a trade, so he enrolled in tailoring courses during his sophomore year. Soon after, Anderson began making clothes for his family and friends, and obtained a part-time tailoring position at a local firm. In his senior year, Anderson was drafted into the U.S. Army, forcing him to leave school for basic training. He was then deployed to the Philippines.

African Americans--South Carolina--Charleston.

World War, 1939-1945--Participation, African American.

Beauty operators--South Carolina--Charleston.

African American business enterprises--History--20th century.

Video Oral History Interview with Marion Anderson, Section A2007_193_001_002, TRT: 0:29:11
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Marion Anderson was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1945; and, after basic training, was deployed to Manila, Philippines. There, he served as his unit's chef, and studied business at the University of Manila. After being discharged, Anderson returned to his wife, Aleathia Johnson Anderson, in Charleston, South Carolina, where he finished high school and completed his training as a tailor. Anderson was then hired to make pants at the John Rugheimer workshop in Charleston. Wanting to earn more money, he asked to transfer to the all-white coat department, but was denied because of his race. In response, Anderson quit, and went on to manage Berlin's suit shop in Charleston. In 1948, Anderson decided to pursue his career in New York City, where he obtained a position making army jackets at the Popular Manufacturing Company. However, Anderson was repeatedly promoted without an increase in pay; and, after three months, quit to enroll at New York City's American Gentleman School of Design.

Discrimination in employment--South Carolina--Charleston.

Depressions--1929--New York (State)--New York.

Migration, Internal--United States.

World War, 1939-1945--African American soldiers.

United States. Army.

Tailors--New York (State)--New York.

Video Oral History Interview with Marion Anderson, Section A2007_193_001_003, TRT: 0:29:38
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Marion Anderson moved to New York City to pursue a career as a tailor. Through the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, he studied for six months at the American Gentleman School of Design, where he learned to draft womenswear patterns, and strengthened his tailoring skills. Upon graduating, Anderson worked at the Harry Irwing Manufacturing Company, and taught at the Empire Trade School. He went on to serve as a trade instructor at New York City's Rikers Island, where he taught the inmates to make garments and linens for the prison. After seven years, Anderson left Rikers Island to create a tailoring program for special education students at P.S. 85 Sterling High School in Brooklyn, New York, where he remained for thirty-five years. Then, Anderson founded the Manhattanville Needle Trade School in New York City, where the tailoring curriculum consisted of an eighteen week program that covered each stage of designing and sewing a garment.

African American educators.

United States. Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944.

Tailoring--Vocational guidance.

Tailors--New York (State)--New York.

Rikers Island (N.Y.).

Video Oral History Interview with Marion Anderson, Section A2007_193_001_004, TRT: 0:21:08
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Marion Anderson earned a bachelor's degree from Adelphi University in Garden City, New York in the 1970s. In New York City, Anderson raised five children with his wife, Aleathia Johnson Anderson; and required each of them to study sewing and tailoring. Two of his children followed in Anderson's example, pursuing careers in the fashion industry. His son, Mark Anderson, studied textiles at the Institute of Textile Technology in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and his daughter, Adriene Anderson, became a clothing manufacturer representative in the Garment District of New York City. His other daughters, Alva Anderson Weinberger and Audrey Anderson, both became teachers. Anderson reflects upon his life, and narrates his photographs. He concludes the interview by describing the garden at his home in New York City.

Parenting--United States.

Occupational training.

African Americans--Education (Higher).