

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Mona Lake Jones

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Jones, Mona Lake
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Mona Lake Jones,
Dates:	June 5, 2008, October 28, 2007 and October 7, 2017
Bulk Dates:	2007, 2008 and 2017
Physical Description:	8 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:37:34).
Abstract:	Poet, education administrator, and motivational speaker Mona Lake Jones (1939 -) served as president of the Washington State Community College Black Educators and was president of the Black Child Development Institute from 1995 to 1997. She served as poet curator of Seattle and poet laureate of King County. Jones was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 5, 2008, October 28, 2007 and October 7, 2017, in Seattle, Washington. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_310
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Poet and educator Mona Lake Jones (known to many as “Grandhoney”) was born on August 30, 1939 in Mason City, now Grand Coulee, Washington. The daughter of Pauline Sims Lake and Sylvester James Lake, Jones grew up in Spokane, Washington where she attended McKinley Elementary School, Libby Junior High School and graduated from Lewis and Clark High School in 1957. There, she was a drum majorette who enjoyed music and poetry. Attending Washington State University on a music scholarship, Jones was the only black woman on campus for an entire semester. She graduated with her B.S. degree in education in 1961. Jones later attended the University of Washington and earned her Ed.D. degree in education from Seattle University in 1991.

Moving to Seattle, Washington, Jones taught in Seattle Public Schools, area colleges and was a leader in Mt. Zion Baptist Church’s Ethnic School, a Saturday school to unite children around common themes of heritage, assertiveness and academics. Jones has served as president of the Washington State Community College Black Educators, as National Vice-President of the Council of Black American Affairs and was president of the Black Child Development Institute from 1995 to 1997. She was also Director of Public Relations for Seattle Community Colleges.

Jones’ first poem was published in *Essence* magazine in 1990 and that led her to write *The Color of Culture*, now in its seventh printing, and two sequels, *The Color of Culture II* and *The Color of Culture III*. She also authored *Unleashing the Power of a Sister*. Her 1992 poem, “A Roomful of Sisters” was commissioned by 100 Black Women of Boston, a national civic group, and exhibited at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. The poem inspired a painting by Paul Goodnight, a number of conferences and a yearly New York meeting called ARFOS. Jones has served as a poet curator and a poet laureate for the City of Seattle and King County. She is a full-time poet and motivational speaker, spending much of her time on the road, speaking at colleges, conventions and to civic groups about issues of culture and diversity. Jones has appeared on programs with Oprah Winfrey, Danny Glover, Susan

Taylor, Maxine Waters, Shirley Chisholm, Myrlie Evers-Williams and Randall Robinson. Jones also composed the lyrics for Vanessa Williams' musical recording of "Open Your Eyes, You Can Fly". Jones has received numerous awards, including the Blackbird Literary Award and the Langston Hughes Award.

Jones is married to publisher, Joe Jones, has two grown children and three grandchildren.

Jones was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on October 28, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Mona Lake Jones was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 5, 2008, October 28, 2007 and October 7, 2017, in Seattle, Washington, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. Poet, education administrator, and motivational speaker Mona Lake Jones (1939 -) served as president of the Washington State Community College Black Educators and was president of the Black Child Development Institute from 1995 to 1997. She served as poet curator of Seattle and poet laureate of King County.

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:

Jones, Mona Lake

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Jones, Mona Lake--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Poet

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 Mona Lake Jones, June 5, 2008, October 28, 2007 and October 7, 2017. 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 Mona Lake Jones, Section A2007_310_001_001, TRT: 0:28:50
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Mona Lake Jones was born on August 30, 1939 in Mason City, Washington to Sylvester Lake and Pauline Sims Lake. Lake Jones' mother was born to Mary Bell and Eddie Sims, who never married; and was raised by her mother and grandfather in Jackson, Tennessee, while her father lived in Holly Springs, Mississippi. Lake Jones' maternal grandmother worked as a seamstress, and her mother attended the public schools in Jackson, where she met Lake Jones' father, who was born in Bolivar, Tennessee. Lake Jones' parents began dating at Merry High School, and her father went on to attend Jackson's Lane College. After his sophomore year, he moved to Grand Coulee, Washington to work on the dam construction. He decided to remain in Washington, where he was joined by Lake Jones' mother; and, after the dam was completed, worked at Kaiser Aluminum until retiring. Lake Jones grew up in Spokane, Washington, where a white friend was once forbidden from playing with her because of her race.

Video Oral History Interview with Mona Lake Jones, Section A2007_310_001_002, TRT: 0:28:30
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Mona Lake Jones grew up in a primarily white, working class neighborhood in Spokane, Washington. There, she often fought with the children who bullied her friend, Freda, for her dark skin; and, in kindergarten, was scolded for making a paint color that matched her skin, instead of using the white flesh colored paint provided by the teacher. Lake Jones attended McKinley Elementary School and Libby Junior High School, where she was the only African American student. She also studied at the Dorothy Stevens School of Drama while in elementary school. Her family belonged to the Calvary Baptist Church, where her father, Sylvester Lake, helped found the Orbit Club, a place for African American teenagers to socialize on the weekends. Lake Jones often went to the movies with her friends, and watched her father's boxing matches. She attended Lewis and Clark High School, where she was elected student body secretary. She also began reciting poetry at a weekly art club attended by her mother, Pauline Sims Lake.

Video Oral History Interview with Mona Lake Jones, Section A2007_310_001_003, TRT: 0:29:30
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Mona Lake Jones was the head drum majorette at Lewis and Clark High School in Spokane, Washington. She also joined the dance team at the State College of Washington in Pullman, Washington. There, she was the only African American woman, and was frequently invited on dates by her black male peers. Lake Jones aspired to become a dietician, but changed her major to education after having difficulty in a chemistry class. She was encouraged by her music teacher, but experienced discrimination from her other instructors, one of whom accused her of cheating, and another of whom gave her a failing grade. Despite this, she was motivated to succeed by her parents, Sylvester Lake and Pauline Sims Lake. Upon graduating in 1961, Lake Jones began teaching at an elementary school in Bellevue, Washington, a wealthy suburb of Seattle, Washington. She went on to teach at Seattle's Harrison School. After marrying Joe Jones and having children, Lake Jones pursued a master's degree at the University of Washington in Seattle.

Video Oral History Interview with Mona Lake Jones, Section A2007_310_001_004, TRT: 0:28:50
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Mona Lake Jones founded the Mt. Zion Ethnic School in Seattle, Washington in the 1970s. There, her pupils studied black culture and history, and received

lessons in etiquette. After leaving the school, she became the president of the Black Child Development Institute's Seattle chapter, and developed SAT preparation classes for African American students through The Links. In the 1980s, Lake Jones earned a master's degree at the University of Washington, and an Ed.D. degree at Seattle University, where she wrote her dissertation on African American parenting, and later taught parenting workshops. Eventually, Lake Jones began writing poems to include in her lessons and lectures. After performing 'Room Full of Sisters,' she was approached by Essence editor Stephanie Stokes Oliver, who asked her to submit her writing to the magazine. Lake Jones went on to work with Essence's editor in chief, Susan Taylor. She also describes the South Central Athletic Association, a track team founded by her husband, Joe Jones.

Video Oral History Interview with Mona Lake Jones, Section A2007_310_001_005, TRT: 0:31:10
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Mona Lake Jones met her husband, Joe Jones, at the Seattle World's Fair in 1962. They later married, and had two children, Brent Jones and Dana Walker Jones, as well as three grandchildren. Lake Jones talks about the inspiration for her poetry, including her family life and African American culture. She also reflects upon her life and legacy, her concerns for the African American community and how she would like to be remembered. Lake Jones concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Mona Lake Jones, Section A2007_310_002_006, TRT: 0:11:00
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Mona Lake Jones narrates her photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Mona Lake Jones, Section A2007_310_003_007, TRT: 7:32:22
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Mona Lake Jones served as poet laureate of King County, Washington from 2000 until 2003; and during this time, she was also the director of public relations for Seattle Community Colleges. She later left that position in order to return to teaching, and was hired at Pacific Oaks College - Northwest, where she helped train aspiring educators until her retirement in 2010. At this point in the interview, Jones describes her educational philosophy. Jones continued her civic work after retirement, and joined the executive council of the YWCA. She helped organize a conference on ways to eliminate racism, and pushed to make quality housing available to women of color. In addition, she led workshops for the board members of the YWCA, which illuminated the prevalence of racism in Seattle, Washington. Jones also coordinated weekly discussion groups for African American senior citizens. In 2016, she published her fifth book, 'Nectar from Grandhoney,' which shared inspirational phrases and advice.

Video Oral History Interview with Mona Lake Jones, Section A2007_310_003_008, TRT: 8:27:22
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Mona Lake Jones was an active volunteer in the campaign to elect Barack Obama as president in 2008. She continued her community involvement by organizing events for senior citizens, including a senior fitness class and a conference on age-based prejudice. In 2016, Jones' published her fifth book, 'Nectar from Grandhoney,' which she promoted at her public speaking engagements. It featured Jones' reflections on life, such as her experiences as an African American Seattleite. At this point, Jones talks about celebrating her racial identity. At the time of the interview, she was in the process of completing and publishing two children's books. Jones reflects upon her life and legacy; and describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community. She concludes the interview by describing how she would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Mona Lake Jones, Section
A2007_310_Jones_Mona_06_MED_001, TRT: 0:53:34