

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Malik Yoba

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Yoba, Malik
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Malik Yoba,
Dates:	December 9, 2014
Bulk Dates:	2014
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:06:17).
Abstract:	Actor Malik Yoba (1967 -) was best known for his roles in the film 'Cool Runnings' and the television series 'New York Undercover' and 'Empire.' Yoba was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on December 9, 2014, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2014_262
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Actor and youth activist Malik Yoba was born Abdul-Malik Kashie Yoba on September 17, 1967 in the Bronx, New York to Erutan Abdullah Yoba and Mahmoudah Young Lanier. He was raised as a Sunni Muslim in East Harlem. Yoba earned his high school diploma in 1989 from City-As-School in Manhattan, New York.

In 1983, Yoba began working at the Negro Ensemble Theatre in concessions, as an usher, and in other roles. He joined the City Kids Foundation, an arts-education focused youth leadership organization, in 1986, beginning as a volunteer and eventually becoming vice president of the Foundation in 1991. Yoba's acting career began in 1989 with a small AIDS-education film called *Seriously Fresh*. In 1991, he landed a starring role in the Disney film *Cool Runnings*. In 1994, while making an appearance in an episode of *Law & Order*, Yoba auditioned for a new Fox television police drama called *New York Undercover*, receiving the lead role of NYPD Detective J. C. Williams. He and his co-star Michael DeLorenzo made history as the first cop-drama featuring actors of color in both leading roles. Yoba went on to star in several television series, such as *Bull*, *Thief*, *Defying Gravity*, *Alphas*, and *Revolution*. He also continued his film career, starring in movies like *Smoke*, *CopLand*, *Soul Food*, *Why Did I Get Married?* and its sequel *Why Did I Get Married Too?*, and *Betty and Coretta*. Yoba starred in the David E. Talbert play *His Woman, His Wife* in 2000, touring the country with the production. In 2011, he began teaching a course entitled "The Working Actor" at Long Island University's Brooklyn campus. Yoba co-founded and launched iconic32, a lifestyle company and innovation studio, in 2014. That same year, he joined the cast of the Fox series *Empire*, starring alongside actor Terrence Howard.

In 1994, *The New York Times* named Yoba one of 30 young artists under the age of 30 who would change American culture in the next thirty years. Yoba was honored with three NAACP Image Awards for Outstanding Actor in a Drama Series in 1996, 1997, and 1998 for his work on *New York Undercover*. He founded the Malik Yoba Fatherhood Project in 2001, and Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. inducted Yoba as an honorary brother in 2009.

Yoba lives in New York, New York, and has three children, Josiah, Dena, and Pria.

Malik Yoba was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on December 9, 2014.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Malik Yoba was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on December 9, 2014, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Actor Malik Yoba (1967 -) was best known for his roles in the film 'Cool Runnings' and the television series 'New York Undercover' and 'Empire.'

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:

Yoba, Malik

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Yoba, Malik--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Actor

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 Malik Yoba, December 9, 2014. 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 Malik Yoba, Section A2014_262_001_001, TRT: 1:26:33 ?

Malik Yoba was born on September 17, 1967 in New York City to Mahmoudah Young Lanier and Abdullah Yoba. His father was born as Milton Myers in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania to Sarah Covington Myers and John Myers. To escape

his abusive father, he moved to New York City at a young age. He later met Yoba's mother, who was a native of Harlem. She was raised by a single mother, and although she did not know her father, she later learned that his family originated in British Guiana. After marrying, Yoba's parents settled in a diverse community in the South Bronx, where they raised Yoba and his five siblings. When he was four years old, Yoba attended an off Broadway production of 'Alice in Wonderland,' which sparked his interest in theater. He also enjoyed listening to radio programs like 'The Lone Ranger' and 'The Shadow,' and the music of The Jackson 5, Stevie Wonder and Billie Holiday. In the mid-1970s, his family moved to a co-op building in East Harlem, which was financed by his father's employer, Local 1199.

Video Oral History Interview with Malik Yoba, Section A2014_262_001_002, TRT: 2:29:05 ?

Malik Yoba was raised in a Sunni Muslim household in the Bronx, New York, and often rebelled against the strict practices of his family's faith. He attended P.S. 198 and P.S. 109 Sedgwick School in the Bronx, and was cast in his first play, 'Rowdy Kate,' during the fifth grade. When Yoba was ten years old, his parents, Mahmoudah Young Lanier and Abdullah Yoba, separated. His mother left the family home, while Yoba and his siblings remained with their father. Yoba went on to attend Park West High School, where he was shot during an altercation. He then transferred to the Talent Unlimited program at Julia Richman High School. Unable to conform to his father's rules, Yoba left the family home at sixteen years old, and eventually went to live with his mother. During this time, he converted to Buddhism, and began working at the Negro Ensemble Company's concessions stand. There, he was inspired by Samuel L. Jackson, Phylicia Rashad and Denzel Washington. He also took lessons from actress Cynthia Belgrave.

Video Oral History Interview with Malik Yoba, Section A2014_262_001_003, TRT: 3:37:50 ?

Malik Yoba decided to pursue a career in acting, and transferred to New York City's City-As-School, which offered a flexible work study program. Inspired by actor Samuel L. Jackson and playwright Charles Fuller, Yoba took acting classes at HB Studios and auditioned for musicals and films, but was largely unsuccessful. He became interested in studying early childhood education and musical theater, and went to work for The Upward Fund, Inc. at seventeen years old. From there, he was hired at The CityKids Foundation, Inc., and helped establish a chapter in Los Angeles, California. At twenty-three years old, he was promoted vice president of the organization. He worked with the CityKids Repertory Company, and appeared on 'The Oprah Winfrey Show' and 'The Phil Donahue Show.' He also met Robert De Niro, Quincy Jones, Bruce Willis and Herbie Hancock, who were all supporters. In 1993, Yoba made his film debut in 'Cool Runnings.' He also remembers attending the 1985 World Peace Culture Festival in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Video Oral History Interview with Malik Yoba, Section A2014_262_001_004, TRT: 4:35:08 ?

Malik Yoba starred in the film 'Cool Runnings' in 1993, and went on to appear in an episode of 'Law and Order.' In 1994, he landed a lead role on the FOX television series 'New York Undercover' alongside Latino actors Michael DeLorenzo and Lauren Vélez. Created by Dick Wolf and executive producer Andre Harrell of Uptown Records, the show was inspired by real life undercover police officers from Chicago, Illinois, and featured emerging actors like Terrence Howard, Mekhi Phifer and Naomi Campbell. During the show's run, Yoba appeared in the film 'Cop Land' with Sylvester Stallone and Robert De Niro. Despite the series' commercial success, Yoba and the crew were treated poorly on set. In response to their appeal for better working conditions, the

network decided to cancel the series after its fourth season. At this point, Yoba recalls the growth of black television programming, hip hop music and black magazines like Vibe and Jet in the 1990s. He also talks about the importance of therapy.

Video Oral History Interview with Malik Yoba, Section A2014_262_001_005, TRT: 5:30:40 ?

Malik Yoba starred in all four seasons of 'New York Undercover.' After the show was cancelled in 1998, he was labeled as a troublemaker in Hollywood and struggled to find work, although he appeared in the short lived television show 'Trinity.' He was also considered for the role of John Shaft II in the 2000 remake of 'Shaft,' but the studio decided to cast Samuel L. Jackson instead. In 2000, Yoba joined the cast of the TNT series 'Bull' with the support of producer Eric Laneuville, but the show was ultimately cancelled. At this time, Yoba began acting in the plays of David E. Talbert. He also had a recurring role on the series 'Girlfriends.' In 2007, Yoba starred opposite Janet Jackson in Tyler Perry's 'Why Did I Get Married?' In 2012, he became a series regular on the sci-fi drama 'Alphas.' In addition to acting, Yoba owned a restaurant called Soul Café in New York City. He also founded the Malik Yoba National Theatre and the digital branding agency, Iconic32.

Video Oral History Interview with Malik Yoba, Section A2014_262_001_006, TRT: 6:27:01 ?

Malik Yoba joined the cast of 'Empire' alongside Terrence Howard and Taraji P. Henson in 2014. Created by actor Danny Strong and film director Lee Daniels, the show premiered on FOX in 2015. With his brother, A. Rahman Yoba, he wrote the play 'What's on the Hearts of Men.' At this point, Yoba talks about the black culture of the 1990s, and his interest in books about masculinity, like Sam Keen's 'Fire in the Belly: On Being a Man' and David Deida's 'The Way of the Superior Man.' He also describes his spirituality, including his practice of Buddhism, and how he would like to be remembered. Yoba concludes the interview by reflecting upon his life and career as well as the legacy of his generation.