

JUANITA MOORE BIOGRAPHY

JUANITA MOORE WAS BORN ON OCTOBER 19TH, 1915 IN ITTA BENA MISSISSIPPI ON THE MOORE FAMILY FARM, THE YOUNGEST OF NINE CHILDREN, HER SIBLINGS INCLUDED, (SIX SISTERS AND TWO BROTHERS).

EARLY ON, JUANITA DEVELOPED AN INDEPENDENT NATURE AND AN ABILITY TO MAKE SOUND DECISIONS. HER MOTHER WILLIE ELLA DUNN- MOORE MOVED THE FAMILY TO LOS ANGELES DURING THE GREAT MIGRATION AFTER THE DEATH OF HER HUSBAND HARRISON MOORE.

IN GRADE SCHOOL JUANITA SANG IN THE GLEE CLUB AND FORMED A FEMALE TRIO IN HIGH SCHOOL THAT PERFORMED IN SCHOOL FUNCTIONS. WHILE AT JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL IN LOS ANGELES, SHE WAS CONSIDERED BY MANY TO BE A 5'8" TALENTED NATURAL BEAUTY. AT SEVENTEEN, JUANITA TRAVELED TO NEW YORK WITH HER FELLOW HIGH SCHOOL TRIO MEMBER, EMMA PRIESELLEY, DURING HARLEM'S RENAISSANCE TO PURSUE A CAREER IN SHOW BUSINESS. SHE SANG AND DANCED THROUGHOUT HARLEM AS A CHORUS GIRL AND APPEARED IN TWO MOVIES IN 1933, **ROMAN SCANDALS** AND **SO THIS IS AFRICA** AS A DANCER. AT TWENTY YEARS OF AGE, SHE MOVED TO EUROPE PERFORMING WITH JOSEPHINE BAKER AND OTHERS IN CHORUS LINES. JUANITA PERFORMED THROUGHOUT EUROPE BUT RETURNED HOME IN 1937 TO ASSIST HER AILING MOTHER. FOR SEVEN PLUS DECADES HER INNATE INTUITION AND IMAGINATION HELPED HER NEGOTIATE SHOW BUSINESSES UNCERTAINTIES.

DURING THE LATE 1930'S AND EARLY 1940'S JUANITA SANG AND DANCED WITH CHORUS TROUPES IN BLACK CINEMA AND APPEARED IN SOUNDIES SUCH AS SHINE WITH LOUIS (SATCHMO) ARMSTRONG AND PAPER DOLL WITH THE MILLS BROTHERS AND DOROTHY DANDRIDGE DEVELOPING AN ENDURING FRIENDSHIP WITH HER.

ON NOVEMBER 26, 1942 JUANITA MOORE MARRIED ANANIAS BERRY OF THE WORLD-FAMOUS BERRY BROTHERS DANCE TEAM IN NEW YORK AND WAS MARRIED TO HIM UNTIL HIS DEATH FROM CANCER IN OCTOBER 1951.

DURING THE WAR, JUANITA CONTINUED TO DANCE IN FILMS, INCLUDING STAR SPANGLED RHYTHM (1942) AND THE ALL-BLACK CAST MUSICAL, CABIN IN THE SKY (1943). GRADUALLY, JUANITA BEGAN TO GET SMALL SPEAKING PARTS. WHILE STUDYING AT THE RACIALLY INTEGRATED ACTOR'S LAB IN HOLLYWOOD, OBTAINING HER FIRST SPEAKING FILM ROLE AS A NURSE IN PINKY, (1949). SHE STUDIED AT THE ACTORS LAB WITH MARLON BRANDO, DOROTHY DANDRIDGE AND MARILYN MONROE AMONG OTHER ACTING LUMINARIES. THE ACTOR'S LAB PROVIDED JUANITA WITH A REWARDING RANGE OF UN-STEREOTYPICAL ACTING ROLES, BUT RACIALLY CHARGED HOLLYWOOD OF THE TIME, PROVIDED A SUCCESSION OF UNBILLED BIT PARTS, PLAYING MAIDS OR POWDER ROOM ATTENDANTS. JUANITA OBSERVED THAT DURING THIS PERIOD, FEW BLACK ACTORS WERE GIVEN THE SAME OPPORTUNITY TO HONE THEIR CRAFT AS WHITE ACTORS WERE GIVEN.

NEVERTHELESS, JUANITA MADE HER PRESENCE FELT IN FILMS LIKE AFFAIR IN TRINIDAD, (1952), WOMEN'S PRISON, (1955), AND THE GIRL CAN'T HELP IT, (1956).

JUANITA MOORE'S BREAKTHROUGH CAME AT FORTY FOUR YEARS OF AGE WITH UNIVERSAL'S IMITATION OF LIFE (1959) DIRECTED BY DOUGLAS SIRK. MANY REVIEWERS OF THE FILM, INCLUDING THE GERMAN DIRECTOR RAINER WERNER FASSBINDER, OBSERVED THAT THE FILM STARTS AS A FILM ABOUT THE WHITE WOMAN AND TURNS INTO A FILM ABOUT THE BLACK WOMAN. THE FILM EARNED JUANITA MOORE A NOMINATION FOR BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS, THE FIFTH NOMINATION FOR A BLACK ACTOR AND THE THIRD IN THE SUPPORTING ACTRESS CATEGORY.

JUANITA GAINED GREAT SATISFACTION FROM HER STAGE ROLES AND IN 1959 TRAVELED TO LONDON TO PLAY THE STRONG AND DEVOTED MATRIARCH MAMA LENA IN LORRAINE HANSBERRY'S AWARD-WINNING PLAY, A RAISIN IN THE SUN AT THE ADELPHI THEATER.

DURING THE 1960'S JUANITA MOORE WAS REGULARLY SEEN ON TELEVISION PRODUCTIONS SUCH AS ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS, THE ALFRED HITCHCOCK HOUR, WAGON TRAIN, DRAGNET, GENTLE BEN, AND OTHERS. SHE ALSO APPEARED IN MOVIE PRODUCTIONS SUCH AS WALK ON THE WILD SIDE, STANLEY KRAMER'S A CHILD IS WAITING WITH BURT LANCASTER AND JUDY GARLAND, THE SINGING NUN WITH DEBBIE REYNOLDS AND UPTIGHT WITH RUBY DEE, A LIFE LONG FRIEND.

JUANITA MOORE WAS VICE PRESIDENT OF THE ORIGINAL CAMBRIDGE PLAYERS, WHO TOOK A LOS ANGELES PRODUCTION OF THE AMEN CORNER TO BROADWAY TO THE ETHEL BARRYMORE THEATER IN APRIL 1965. NAT KING COLE AND HIS WIFE MARIA PROVIDED FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE PRODUCTION. JUANITA WAS FRIENDS WITH MARLON BRANDO AND JAMES BALDWIN AND ASKED BRANDO TO LEND BALDWIN THE FUNDS (\$75) TO WRITE THE PLAY.

BETTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR JUANITA MOORE CAME DURING THE ERA KNOWN AS BLAXPLOITATION, WITH SUPPORTING ROLES IN THE MACK (1973), THOMASINE AND BUSHROD (1974) AND ABBY (1974). JUANITA GAINED ADDITIONAL WORK IN TELEVISION, ON COMMERCIALS SUCH AS BEING THE EX-LAX LADY WHICH RAN FOR YEARS, VOICE OVERS AND TYSON FOODS COMMERCIALS, AS WELL AS STAGE PERFORMANCES.

JUANITA SUPPORTED THE EBONY SHOWCASE THEATER IN LOS ANGELES FOUNDED BY NICK AND EDNA STEWART, A VENUE FOR BLACK PERFORMERS TO PLAY THE TYPE ROLES THAT THEY WERE DENIED IN MAINSTREAM THEATER PRODUCTIONS. JUANITA REGULARLY PERFORMED AT THE EBONY SHOWCASE THEATER AND GAVE FREE ACTING LESSONS TO NEIGHBORHOOD CHILDREN.

JUANITA CONTINUED TO WORK IN MOVIES AND TELEVISION SPORADICALLY DURING THE 1980'S AND 1990'S WHILE CARING FOR HER AILING HUSBAND CHARLES BURRIS. IN 1981, JUANITA APPEARED IN THE ABC WEEKEND SPECIAL, THE NOTORIOUS JUMPING

FROG OF CALAVERAS COUNTY, AS WELL AS MOVIES SUCH AS PATERNITY WITH BURT REYNOLDS (1981), O'HARA'S WIFE (1982), AND SPENCER WILLIAMS REMEMBRANCES OF AN EARLY BLACK FILM PIONEER (1986).

EARLY IN 2000, WHILE SEMI-RETIRED AT ABOUT 85 YEARS OF AGE JUANITA MOORE WAS REDISCOVERED BY AN AGENT IN A CHANCE MEETING WHICH LED TO A ROLE IN WALT DISNEY'S THE KID, HER FINAL FEATURE FILM.

SUBSEQUENTLY, JUANITA HAPPILY ATTENDED IMITATION OF LIFE FILM REVIVALS WHEN INVITED. ON APRIL 23, 2010 WHEN SHE WAS NINETY-FOUR YEARS OF AGE, A NEW PRINT OF IMITATION OF LIFE (1959) WAS SCREENED AT THE TURNER CLASSIC MOVIES FILM FESTIVAL IN LOS ANGELES, WHICH SHE ATTENDED WITH HER CO-STAR SUSAN KOHNER. AFTER THE SCREENING AND A Q&A SESSION, BOTH ACTORS RECEIVED A STANDING OVATION.

JUANITA MOORE'S UNPARALLELED SHOW BUSINESS LONGEVITY, (SEVEN + DECADES), AND REFUSAL TO ACCEPT DEMEANING ROLES, EARNED HER ADMIRATION THROUGHOUT THE INDUSTRY. SHE DEVELOPED NUMEROUS FRIENDSHIPS IN THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY, SUPPORTED ALL INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF THEIR RACE OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND WAS RESPECTED FOR SPEAKING HER MIND.

THE CURTAINS CLOSED FOR JUANITA MOORE ON DECEMBER 31ST 2013 AT 98 YEARS OF AGE, JOINING A GALAXY OF STARS.