

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dyana Williams

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Williams, Dyana, 1953-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dyana Williams,
Dates:	February 8, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:59:34).
Abstract:	Talent management chief executive, radio personality, and music producer Dyana Williams (1953 -) was the first African American woman rock DJ at WRQX-FM in Washington, D.C., served as program director at WMMJ radio in Washington, D.C., and creator of the show, "Love on the Menu," for WDAS radio in Philadelphia. Aside from her on-air presence, Williams co-launched the Association of African American Music, and co-wrote the House Concurrent Bill 509, which recognized African American accomplishments in music and helped establish Black Music Month. Williams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 8, 2005, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_041
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Dyana Williams, producer, artist development coach, former DJ, and founder of the International Association of African American Music (IAAAM), grew up in New York City. Williams's mother, Nancy Williams Newman, was Puerto Rican, and her father, George G. Williams, was from Virginia. Williams attended P.S. 78 in the Bronx until she was 10 years old; she then moved to Puerto Rico where she attended Santa Rita Elementary School in Bayamon. Returning to the United States, Williams attended junior high school at Eleanor Roosevelt Intermediate School #143 in Harlem. An outstanding flute player at Washington Irving High School, Williams performed with Jimmy Heath and Hubert Laws. After graduating in 1971, Williams enrolled in the City College of New York where she became a DJ for the college radio station, WCCR.

By 1973, Williams had joined the staff of Howard University radio WHUR-FM. There, under the guidance of Bob "Nighthawk" Terry and John Paul Simpkins, Williams's Ebony Moonbeams show attracted a strong following. In 1975, legendary DJ Frankie Crocker brought Williams to New York City's WBLS radio; in 1976, she returned to Washington, D.C., where she became the first African American woman rock DJ at WRQX-FM. Williams worked as program director at WMMJ radio and as the host of television's *P.M. Magazine*. After moving to Philadelphia in 1982, Williams established a show called Love on the Menu for WDAS radio. Williams also reported for Black Entertainment Television (BET), and worked as music consultant for *The Soul of VH1*. Closely associated with The Sound of Philadelphia (TSOP) and Philadelphia jazz and soul artists such as Patti LaBelle, Art Tatum, and Teddy Pendergrass, Williams produced the PBS special, *The Philadelphia Music Makers* in 1990. As a writer, Williams contributed to *The Philadelphia Tribune*, *Billboard Magazine*, and *The Philadelphia New Observer*.

In 1990, Williams and Sheila Eldridge launched the Association of African American Music (IAAAM) to promote and preserve black music. Williams co-wrote the House Concurrent Bill 509, which recognized African American accomplishments in music and helped establish Black Music Month. In 1997 Williams earned her B.A. degree in television, radio, and film from Temple University. Williams formed Creative Consultants for Soul Solidarity in partnership with Eldridge. In 2006 Williams received the Achievement in Radio Award for Best Weekend Show in Philadelphia. Williams was formerly married to music producer and activist Kenny Gamble; their union produced three children.

Dyana Williams was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 8, 2005.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dyana Williams was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 8, 2005, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Talent management chief executive, radio personality, and music producer Dyana Williams (1953 -) was the first African American woman rock DJ at WRQX-FM in Washington, D.C., served as program director at WMMJ radio in Washington, D.C., and creator of the show, "Love on the Menu," for WDAS radio in Philadelphia. Aside from her on-air presence, Williams co-launched the Association of African American Music, and co-wrote the House Concurrent Bill 509, which recognized African American accomplishments in music and helped establish Black Music Month.

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:

Williams, Dyana, 1953-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Williams, Dyana, 1953---Interviews

African American radio broadcasters--Interviews

African American women executives--Interviews

African Americans in radio broadcasting--Interviews

African American disc jockeys--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Radio Personality

Music Producer

HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers|MusicMakers

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 Dyana Williams, February 8, 2005. 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 Dyana Williams, Section A2005_041_001_001, TRT: 0:29:45 ?

Dyana Williams was born on November 9, 1953 in Queens, New York. Her mother, Nancy Rafaela Delgado Vives Williams Neuman was born on October 20, 1933 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Her maternal grandfather, Juan Delgado Vives, a teacher and businessman, was from Ponce, Puerto Rico, and her maternal grandmother, Bienvenida Vives, was from Myos, Puerto Rico. Although raised Catholic, Williams' mother was not devout in her practice. Her mother came to the United States in 1941, attended Brooklyn College and New York University in New York City, New York, earned her Ph.D. in public health nursing, and was a professor at Jersey City State University in Jersey City, New Jersey. Williams' father, George Williams, was born on January 29, 1933 in Culpepper, Virginia. Her paternal ancestry includes Irish, Native American, and African American. Williams' father served in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War. Williams' parents were introduced by her maternal uncle and they were married at age eighteen. She is an only child.

African American radio broadcasters--Interviews.

African American women executives--Interviews.

African Americans in radio broadcasting--Interviews.

African American disc jockeys--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Dyana Williams, Section A2005_041_001_002, TRT: 0:29:35 ?

Dyana Williams describes her earliest memory of biting a dog when it stuck its tongue out at her. The dog died shortly thereafter. Williams remembers her maternal grandmother teaching her Spanish, putting sugar on most food including steak, and listening to the radio. Being an only child made Williams an imaginative and independent child. Williams grew up in the Bronx, New York until age ten when her family moved to Puerto Rico for two years before returning to Harlem, New York. Williams rarely attended church in New York but did so daily in Puerto Rico. After her parents' divorce, Williams lived with her mother. Williams attended P.S. 78 in the Bronx, Santa Rita Elementary School in Bayamon, Puerto Rico, and Eleanor Roosevelt Intermediate School #143 in Harlem. Williams describes the racism she experienced in Puerto Rico where others made of her Spanish and darker skin. In the interview, she shares her memories of the Civil Rights Movement and her exposure to culture in Harlem.

Video Oral History Interview with Dyana Williams, Section A2005_041_001_003, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Dyana Williams studied flute under Jimmy Heath while attending Washington Irving High School. At age seventeen, Williams sought individualized flute lessons from legendary jazz flutist Hubert Laws, and the two started dating despite a fourteen year age difference. Williams joined Laws at studio sessions and met Aretha Franklin, Donny Hathaway, and HistoryMaker Quincy Jones. While attending City College of New York in Harlem, New York, Williams became a radio host and manager of WCCR and appeared on the television show 'Teleprompter'. She moved to California with Laws but returned to New York after their break up and was hired by WHUR-FM in Washington, D.C. in 1973. Under the guidance of Bob "Nighthawk" Terry and John Paul Simpkins, Williams's Ebony Moonbeams show attracted a strong following, and she befriended Sheila Eldridge and HistoryMaker Cathy Hughes. Williams describes the programming freedom she had and meeting Miles Davis and her former husband HistoryMaker Kenny Gamble.

Video Oral History Interview with Dyana Williams, Section A2005_041_001_004, TRT: 0:29:57 ?

Dyana Williams talks about meeting and falling in love with HistoryMaker Kenny Gamble. Known for his work with Huff and the record label Philadelphia International Records, Gamble produced a number of successful artists which were played on Williams' station WBLS in New York City, New York. Williams left WBLS after a year due to her pregnancy and the conflict between Gamble and Frankie Crocker. Williams was the first African American woman rock DJ at WRQX-FM in Washington D.C and hosted television's "P.M. Magazine." In 1979, Williams moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where Gamble had strong ties to the black community. After staying at home with her children for a while, Williams hosted a radio program called "Love's on the Menu" on WDAS in Philadelphia until 1989. Williams talks about divorcing Gamble, Black Music Month, the demise of the Black Music Association, and founding the International Association of African American Music (IAAAM).

Video Oral History Interview with Dyana Williams, Section A2005_041_001_005, TRT: 0:29:42 ?

Dyana Williams talks about co-writing the House Concurrent Bill 509, which recognized African American accomplishments in music and helped to establish Black Music Month. Williams' articles appeared in The Philadelphia Tribune, Billboard Magazine, and The Philadelphia New Observer. Williams also worked as music consultant for The Soul of VH1. In 1990, Williams produced the PBS special, "The Philadelphia Music Makers" and the International Association of African American Music (IAAAM) Diamond Awards. After hearing Bill Cosby advise Jaleel White to prioritize education, Williams decided to return to college. She first attended Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1984 and then returned a decade later to complete her B.A. degree in television, radio, and film in 1997. At Temple, she befriended HistoryMakers Charles Blockson and Sonia Sanchez. Williams talks about her work in artist development at Influence Entertainment that followed in the footsteps of HistoryMaker Maxine Powell.

Video Oral History Interview with Dyana Williams, Section A2005_041_001_006, TRT: 0:31:25 ?

Dyana Williams talks about serving on a review panel for the National Endowment for the Arts and on the board of the Paul Jones Collection at the University of Delaware in Newark, Delaware. Williams is an avid collector of art, particularly pieces from Philadelphian artists. Williams received three Philadelphia Liberty Bell Awards. Williams describes her hopes and concerns for the black community. She talks about HistoryMaker Gordon Parks, her future plans, and the multiple homes she owns. Williams reflects upon her legacy and concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.