

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Linda Marie Allen

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Allen, Linda Marie, 1961-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Linda Marie Allen,
<b>Dates:</b>	November 5, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:53:14).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Interior designer Linda Marie Allen (1961 - ) was an interior and lighting designer. She invented and patented a line of luxury outdoor wireless table and floor lamps, her signature Live. Anywhere. Collection. She also designed offices and lighting for Magic Johnson and Disney's Japanese theme park, respectively. Allen was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 5, 2007, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_322
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Interior designer Linda Marie Allen was born on May 3, 1961 in Los Angeles, California. Her formative years were a combination of competitive figure skating and private academic tutelage. Allen placed in all state and national competitions that she entered. In her late teens, she became one of the few blacks ever to be a feature in the Ice Capades touring troupe. After touring for awhile, Allen attended California State University in Long Beach, earning her B.S. degree in interior and environmental design. Allen's passion for design originated in her early experiences as a professional ice skater, learning about the importance of color from the spotlights that would flash during the Ice Capades.

Allen's career began while working for lighting design firms that focused on hotels and in Las Vegas, but soon decided that lighting was only one piece of the puzzle. She began designing offices for such clients as *American Golf*, and in 1996, worked as a consultant for Earvin "Magic" Johnson when he was customizing Magic Johnson Enterprises' Beverly Hills offices. With Johnson's encouragement, Allen ultimately began her own interior design company. Soon, Allen was selected by Walt Disney Imagineering to work in their set design department as lead designer, focusing on custom light fixtures in Disney's theme parks, a job that would lead to further work for Disney, including the Tokyo Disney Seas theme park in Japan, and Disneyland's California Adventure. Allen was soon designing for both office and residential clients, including a variety of high-profile entertainers. With her design experience, Allen was hired to make television appearances, including a stint on HGTV's *Designing for the Sexes* and *You're Home*, plus *Area*, the Style Network's design program.

In 2004, Allen's housing design tips appeared in the pages of *Essence* magazine, a feat she would repeat the following year. Her work has appeared in a variety of additional publications, including *The Chicago Tribune*, *Interiors Magazine*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, *Luxe Interiors + Design*, *Better Homes & Gardens*, *Interiors*, the *Robb Report*, *California Homes and Designs*, and *Traditional Home Magazine*. In 2015, Allen was named one of

the top 20 African American Designers in the United States. She also invented the Live. Anywhere. Collection, a collection of wireless table and floor lamps, for which she owns a patent.

Allen was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on November 5, 2007.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Linda Marie Allen was conducted by Jacques Lesure on November 5, 2007, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Interior designer Linda Marie Allen (1961 - ) was an interior and lighting designer. She invented and patented a line of luxury outdoor wireless table and floor lamps, her signature Live. Anywhere. Collection. She also designed offices and lighting for Magic Johnson and Disney's Japanese theme park, respectively.

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## 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Allen, Linda Marie, 1961-

Lesure, Jacques (Interviewer)

Tripoli, Dan (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Allen, Linda Marie, 1961- --Interviews

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Interior decorators--Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## Occupations:

Interior Designer

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

ArtMakers

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## 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 Linda Marie Allen, November 5, 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Linda Marie Allen, Section A2007\_322\_001\_001, TRT: 0:25:21  
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Linda Marie Allen was born on May 3, 1961 in Los Angeles, California to Eleanor Allen and Edgar Allen. Allen's paternal great-grandmother was Japanese, and had a child with an African American soldier during World War I. Their daughter, Allen's paternal grandmother Hela Allen, was hidden from the Japanese internment camps of World War II by her husband, Harry Allen, Sr. Allen's maternal grandfather and grandmother, Mary Gregory, owned a liquor store in Compton, California. Both Allen's parents grew up in Los Angeles, and worked for governmental agencies. They raised Allen and her adopted sister, Lisa Allen, in Los Angeles' Leimert Park neighborhood. There, Allen briefly attended the 6th Avenue Elementary School, before transferring to Transfiguration Elementary School, a Catholic school, where she excelled academically. Allen also took ice skating lessons with her sister at the Culver City Ice Arena, where they were coached by Mabel Fairbanks, the first African American figure skater.

Interior decorators--Interviews

Video Oral History Interview with Linda Marie Allen, Section A2007\_322\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:13  
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Linda Marie Allen began ice skating with Coach Mabel Fairbanks at the Culver City Ice Arena in Culver City, California when she was around six years old. While ice skating came naturally to her sister, Lisa Allen, Allen was much more passionate about the sport, and placed third in her first competition at ten years old. Her sister eventually quit to pursue other interests, but Allen's training became increasingly advanced. While attending Culver City Junior High School, Allen aspired to become an Olympic skater, and trained before and after school. She was one of few African American figure skaters at the time, aside from her peers, Tai Babilonia and Randy Gardner, who became championship pair skaters. Upon reaching high school, Allen attended schools with flexible schedules and correspondence programs that coordinated with her training. Allen was highly successful at competitions, and was poised to win the U.S. Figure Skating Championships at seventeen years old.

Video Oral History Interview with Linda Marie Allen, Section A2007\_322\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:08  
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Linda Marie Allen lost her chance to become an Olympic figure skater when her coach missed the application deadline for the Pacific Coast Sectional Figure Skating Championships in 1980. Allen ended her competitive skating career, and became a principal skater for the Ice Capades, a professional touring ice show. She was the only African American skater in the East Company, and was tokenized by the company's public relations manager, while experiencing racial discrimination from her fellow skaters. After a year, Allen left the company. Having developed an interest in lighting during the Ice Capades productions, she studied lighting design at Santa Monica College and California State University, Long Beach. She also continued her skating career as a performer in the Knott's Berry Farm ice skating shows. Upon graduation, Allen worked as an assistant designer at several California design firms, including Interprise. There, Allen's client, athlete Magic Johnson, encouraged her to found her own company.

Video Oral History Interview with Linda Marie Allen, Section A2007\_322\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:32  
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Linda Marie Allen founded Linda Allen Designs, Inc., and worked as a freelance designer for nearly two years, before returning to work in commercial interior design firms. Then, she was hired by Walt Disney Imagineering Research and

Development, Inc. as a lighting designer for the Tokyo DisneySea theme parks in Japan and the Disney California Adventure Park in Anaheim, California. Through this position, Allen learned about immersive design environments, which influenced her later work. At the end of the projects, Allen began designing homes for Hollywood executives, and was invited to create a bedroom for the Pasadena Showcase House of Design in Pasadena, California. As a result, her designs garnered media attention, and were featured in Essence, Better Homes and Garden and O magazines. Allen reflects upon her life and legacy, as well as her hopes and concerns for the African American community. She concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.