

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dee Dee Warwick

---

## 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>	Warwick, Dee Dee
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Dee Dee Warwick,
<b>Dates:</b>	September 12, 2005
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2005
<b>Physical Description:</b>	3 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:25:32).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Entertainer and singer Dee Dee Warwick (1945 - 2008 ) had a prolific recording career as one of the most respected voices in Soul and Gospel music. Warwick was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 12, 2005, in East Orange, New Jersey. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2005_213
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

One of the most powerful soul singers of all time, Dee Dee Warwick was born Delia Warwick on September 25, 1945, in Newark Heights, New Jersey, into a musical family with its roots steeped in gospel music. Her mother, Arthur Lee Drinkard Warrick, was a founding member of the acclaimed Drinkard Singers, whose line-up included her aunt Cissy Houston. The Drinkard Singers sang regularly at the New Hope Baptist Church in Newark, New Jersey.

As a young teen, Warwick and her older sister Dionne formed their own group called the Gospelaire; the group often appeared with the Drinkard Singers. In 1959, the Warwick sisters got their first big break in the music industry at the famed Apollo Theater in Harlem when they were asked to sing background vocals in a studio session for Sam Taylor. During this session with Savoy Records, the song “Won’t You Deliver Me” was recorded; this was the Warwick sisters’ recording debut. Warwick would go on to be featured in hundreds of recordings that were made in New York between 1960 and 1965.

In 1963, Warwick launched her prolific solo recording career, in which she would become one of the most respected voices in Soul music. Warwick’s discography includes such hits as “I Want To Be With You” and “Foolish Fool;” both of which were recorded for Mercury Records. During the 1970s, Warwick continued to record, adding “She Didn’t Know, She Kept On Talking,” recorded for Atco Records, to her long list of hits. During the 1980s, Warwick recorded albums for Sutra Records and Heritage Records; both of which have become collectors’ items.

After living in Los Angeles and Georgia for a number of years, Warwick moved back to New Jersey, where she started making soul music and appearing in Gospel musicals. Warwick passed away on October 18, 2008, at the age of 63.

---

# Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Dee Dee Warwick was conducted by Shawn Wilson on September 12, 2005, in East Orange, New Jersey, and was recorded on 3 Betacame SP videocassettes. Entertainer and singer Dee Dee Warwick (1945 - 2008 ) had a prolific recording career as one of the most respected voices in Soul and Gospel music.

---

# 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:

Warwick, Dee Dee

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Warwick, Dee Dee--Interviews

---

African American women singers--Interviews

---

African American gospel singers--Interviews

---

Soul musicians--Interviews

---

## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

## Occupations:

Entertainer

---

Singer

---

## HistoryMakers® Category:

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 Dee Dee Warwick, September 12, 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 Dee Dee Warwick, Section A2005\_213\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:39  
?

Dee Dee Warwick was born on September 25, 1945 in Newark Heights, New Jersey to Arthur Lee Drinkard Warrick and Mancel Warrick. Her mother was born in 1920 in Blakely, Georgia but grew up in Newark. Warrick's mother passed away when she was a teenager, so she worked at Picatinny Arsenal in Morris County, New Jersey to support her six siblings. Warrick also founded The Drinkard Singers, a gospel group comprised of Warwick's aunts and uncles, including Cissy Houston, and her adopted sister, Judy Clay. Following the recording of their performance at the Newport Jazz Festival in Newport, Rhode Island, where Mahalia Jackson headlined, the group signed with RCA Records. Warwick's father was born in St. Petersburg, Florida in 1911. His father, Elzae Warrick, pastored St. Luke Methodist Church in Newark. Growing up, Warwick sang in the choir, played the violin, and aspired to be a doctor. She attended Lincoln School, Vernon L. Davey High School, and East Orange High School in East Orange, New Jersey.

African American women singers--Interviews.

African American gospel singers--Interviews.

Soul musicians--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Dee Dee Warwick, Section A2005\_213\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:05  
?

Dee Dee Warwick's father, Mancel Warrick, was a Pullman Porter who worked as an attendant for President Dwight Eisenhower at his request. Warwick recalls the national outrage sparked by Emmett Till's murder in 1955. In the early 1960s, she joined her sister, HistoryMaker Dionne Warwick, as a member of the Gospelairees. While performing at the Apollo Theater in New York City, they met Nappy Brown and became his backup singers. They also sang with Elvis Presley and the Supremes. Although Warwick's parents wanted her to sing gospel music, R&B music was more lucrative. In 1963, Warwick signed to Jubilee Records in New York City as a solo artist, releasing the hit songs 'I Want to Be With You' and 'We're Doing Fine.' She turned down a contract with Motown Records due to poor compensation and creative differences. In New York, Warwick enjoyed the music of performers like HistoryMaker Della ReeseLett at the Sugar Hill Supper Club with her close friend Aretha Franklin. Warwick also remembers meeting Billy Eckstine.

Video Oral History Interview with Dee Dee Warwick, Section A2005\_213\_001\_003, TRT: 0:26:48  
?

Dee Dee Warwick performed at Cleopatra's Barge in Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, Nevada for over a year. Her hit songs 'You're No Good' and 'I'm Gonna Make You Love Me' were covered by the Supremes and the Temptations. Warwick remembers her producer Ed Townsend as a dear friend and credits her mother and Sam Cooke for keeping her away from the negative aspects of the music industry. Warwick recalls a racist encounter in Seattle, Washington in 1979. Warwick received three Grammy Award nominations and was inducted into the R&B Hall of Fame in 1999. She performed in the Broadway play 'Your Arms Are Too Short to box with God' with music by Alex Bradford. Warwick describes her preference for singers like her sister HistoryMaker Dionne Warwick and cousin Whitney Houston over hip hop artists. She reflects upon her legacy, lessons she learned from her family, her hopes for the African American community and how she would like to be remembered. Warwick concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.

