

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Vivian Scott Chew

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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>	Chew, Vivian Scott, 1958-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Vivian Scott Chew,
<b>Dates:</b>	May 18, 2012
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2012
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:23:46).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Music executive Vivian Scott Chew (1958 - ) is an industry fixture in the areas of artist development and international marketing and has the distinction of being the first African American female head of American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP). Chew was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 18, 2012, in Ft. Lee, New Jersey. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2012_117
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Music executive Vivian Scott Chew was born in the Queens, New York neighborhood of Far Rockaway to Mamie Murphy and William Scott on May 14, 1958. She attended Georgetown University from 1976 to 1977. Chew then entered into the music business as an office assistant for entertainment attorney Louise West. Chew also served as a personal assistant to singer, songwriter and producer Kashif, renowned for producing music for notable artists such as Whitney Houston and Evelyn “Champagne” King. From there, Chew was named president of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) in 1985, the first African American woman to head the organization. While at ASCAP she created the Rhythm & Soul Awards, an event that has been in existence for more than twenty years. She was then hired as the head of artists and repertoire (A&R) for Polygram Records in 1987, where she signed internationally acclaimed reggae band Third World. After two years with Polygram, Chew was named vice president of urban music for Sony/550 Records. She was then named vice president of artists and repertoire (A&R) for Epic Records from 1991 to 1997. While at Epic she signed reggae artist Shabba Ranks, a then unknown who rose to international superstardom under Chew. Ranks’ debut album for Epic became the first reggae album to top Billboard’s R&B chart and snagged him the Grammy Award for Best Reggae Album in 1991.

Chew went on to launch her own music company, TimeZone International, three years later. Through TimeZone Chew markets urban music acts to global audiences. Her clients have included notable R&B acts such as Jill Scott, Brain McKnight and India.Arie. Through Chew Entertainment, a company she co-owns with her husband, arranger, producer and musical director, Ray Chew, provides direction and musical support for new and emerging artists.

Vivian Scott Chew is also recognized for her advocacy of juvenile diabetes care and prevention. She serves on the board of directors for Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation of North Jersey and Rockland Counties. In 1993, she co-founded the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation Music Industry Dinner, which raised \$2 million for research for a

cure. Additionally, Chew serves on the Board of Directors for the Black Rock Coalition and is a former board member of the Winston Preparatory School in New York City. Chew is married and resides in Teaneck, New Jersey.

Vivian Chew was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 18, 2012.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Vivian Scott Chew was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 18, 2012, in Ft. Lee, New Jersey, and was recorded on 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Music executive Vivian Scott Chew (1958 - ) is an industry fixture in the areas of artist development and international marketing and has the distinction of being the first African American female head of American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP).

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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:

Chew, Vivian Scott, 1958-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Chew, Vivian Scott, 1958- --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:

Music Executive

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

MusicMakers

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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 Vivian Scott Chew, May 18, 2012. 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 Vivian Scott Chew, Section A2012\_117\_001\_001, TRT: 1:30:12

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Vivian Scott Chew was born on May 14, 1958 in Far Rockaway, New York. Her maternal ancestors, Adeline and Wilson Stephens were freed slaves who worked on the Tyler Plantation in Aiken, South Carolina during the 1900s. Chew's maternal grandfather, Moultrie Germaine fled from South Carolina after he was framed for murder. Her maternal grandmother, Cora Germaine, was a restaurant owner in Aiken, South Carolina. After her restaurant was repeatedly targeted by the Ku Klux Klan, she moved to New York and became a domestic. Chew's mother, Mamie Germaine Murphy worked as a secretary. Growing up, Chew was told that her father, Walter Murphy, was dead. She discovered Murphy was alive at age twelve and formed a relationship with him at age nineteen. At age forty-two, Chew found that her biological father was actually William Scott with whom her mother had an extended affair. He played a fatherly role in her childhood, but also sexually assaulted her. Chew was raised in Far Rockaway, New York with her brother, Lawrence.

Video Oral History Interview with Vivian Scott Chew, Section A2012\_117\_001\_002, TRT: 2:28:59  
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Vivian Scott Chew describes her childhood in Far Rockaway, New York. She enjoyed sports, playing handball, basketball, and softball. Chew remembers the smell of salt water, the sight of nursing homes and the elderly, and the sound of roaring airplanes, kids' voice, and mosquitos. She attended PS 197 until fifth grade and then enrolled at Woodmere Academy in Woodmere, New York, a private school with mostly Jewish students. Chew describes her experience at Woodmere Academy where her favorite teacher was Trevor Nightingale and her best friend was Marni Geist. In high school, Chew grew an afro, discovered her love for music, and was inspired by the successful careers of Jewish mothers in her school. She attended First Baptist Church in Far Rockaway where she served as the gospel director. Through the church's gospel choir, she met gospel stars like Andrae Crouch. She also shares her memory of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination in 1968. Chew graduated from Woodmere Academy in 1976.

Video Oral History Interview with Vivian Scott Chew, Section A2012\_117\_001\_003, TRT: 3:35:39  
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Vivian Scott Chew's Olympic dreams were shattered at age seventeen after a knee injury. She graduated from Woodmere Academy in Woodmere, New York in 1976 and enrolled at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. In D.C., Chew met and married Robert Scott, dropping out of Georgetown at age eighteen. At age twenty-one, she gave birth to her daughter, Loren Scott. Chew's marriage to Scott did not last. She describes her resemblance to her biological father and her family's refusal to acknowledge that her brother was gay. Chew's first job in the music industry was as an assistant to entertainment attorney Louise West in 1982. She then worked for producer Scott Sanders before landing a job with Kashif. After she was fired by Kashif, Chew struggled to support herself and her young daughter. In 1985, she started working for the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) where she founded the Rhythm & Soul Music Awards. Chew was then appointed Director of the A&R Department at PolyGram Records.

Video Oral History Interview with Vivian Scott Chew, Section A2012\_117\_001\_004, TRT: 4:28:48  
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Vivian Scott Chew recruited Third World to PolyGram while working as the Director of the A&R Department. Signing Third World began her long-term relationship with the island of Jamaica, learning about the country's culture and

reggae. At PolyGram, Chew was mentored by Bob Jamieson, who taught her about the international music industry after Chew signed singer Sa-Fire. In 1989, Chew was hired by Hank Caldwell at Epic Records. At the time black women like Sylvia Rhone and Sharon Heyward were welcomed in A&R departments at different labels, achieving great success. Chew remembers how she ushered the rise and success of Jamaican dancehall musician Shabba Ranks as well as the controversy generated by Ranks' anti-gay sentiments in 1992. Patra was another Jamaican singer who Chew guided to success. Although Chew was courted by Chris Blackwell of Island Records, Epic prevented her from leaving and made her head 550 Music. Chew talks about her marriage to HistoryMaker Ray Chew and her company, TimeZone International.

Video Oral History Interview with Vivian Scott Chew, Section A2012\_117\_001\_005, TRT: 5:20:08  
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Vivian Scott Chew talks about the challenges she faced after starting her company, TimeZone International, in 1997. Her first big break came from Kedar Massenburg who gave her A+, her first client. A+'s single "Enjoy Yourself" sold a million copies. Chew also formed a company, Chew Entertainment, with her husband, HistoryMaker Ray Chew. Chew Entertainment produced the Neighborhood Ball as part of President Barack Obama's inauguration as well as events in Carnegie Hall and at the Apollo Theater. The Chews have also started a non-profit foundation, Power to Inspire. Among Chew's clients are Jill Scott, India.Arie, Brian McKnight, Jay-Z, Bebe Winans, Common and McDonald's. Chew reflects upon her aspirations as well as what she would do differently. She talks about her hopes for the African American community, her legacy, and how she would like to be remembered.