

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Michelle Gadsden-Williams

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Gadsden-Williams, Michelle, 1969-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Michelle Gadsden-Williams,
Dates:	July 13, 2013
Bulk Dates:	2013
Physical Description:	5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:21:03).
Abstract:	Management executive Michelle Gadsden-Williams (1969 -) was the first African American executive director of diversity and inclusion at Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation. Gadsden-Williams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 13, 2013, in Somerset, New Jersey. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2013_185
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Management executive Michelle Gadsden-Williams was born on May 21, 1969. She graduated summa cum laude with her B.S. degree in marketing and her B.A. degree in communications from Kean College in 1990. Gadsden-Williams later enrolled in the University of Pennsylvania and graduated with honors with her M.S. degree in organizational dynamics in 2006.

Gadsden-Williams served as a diversity practitioner for more than twenty years in pharmaceutical and financial services. She held positions of increasing responsibility in the diversity management and staffing functions at Merck & Company, Inc., including as senior university relations and diversity consultant, future-talent program and diversity manager, and manager of diversity programs. Gadsden-Williams also held positions in the human resources division and in product management at Philips-Van Heusen Corporation and Wakefern Food Corporation in New Jersey. In 2006, Gadsden-Williams became the first African American executive director of diversity and inclusion at Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation. She was later appointed as managing director and global head of diversity and inclusion and as a member of the Talent, Branding and Communications Management Committee at Credit Suisse AG based in Zurich, Switzerland.

Gadsden-Williams was appointed as a member of the Global Advisory Council on Values for the World Economic Forum, and as a board member of the Jackie Robinson Foundation. She is an active member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., a board member of the SLE Lupus Foundation in New York City, and an executive committee Member of the Women's Leadership Board of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Gadsden-Williams has been profiled in *Black Enterprise Magazine*, *Diversity Executive*, *Ebony*, *Essence*, *Fortune*, *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. Gadsden-Williams is the recipient of a number of community service awards and accolades for her work as a diversity practitioner. She received Novartis' Scientific Operations Business Excellence Award in 2004 and its Human Resources Excellence Award in 2003. In 2005, she was

honored at the YWCA of Central New Jersey's Tribute to Women in Industry Gala. She was the 2010 recipient of the Maya Way Award for Diversity Leadership from Dr. Maya Angelou, and has received an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters Degree from Kean University.

Michelle Gadsden-Williams was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 13, 2013.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Michelle Gadsden-Williams was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on July 13, 2013, in Somerset, New Jersey, and was recorded on 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Management executive Michelle Gadsden-Williams (1969 -) was the first African American executive director of diversity and inclusion at Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation.

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:

Gadsden-Williams, Michelle, 1969-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Gadsden-Williams, Michelle, 1969- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Management Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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 Michelle Gadsden-Williams, July 13, 2013. 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 Michelle Gadsden-Williams, Section A2013_185_001_001, TRT: 1:30:40 ?

Michelle Gadsden-Williams was born on May 21, 1969 in Somerset, New Jersey to Anna Grant Gadsden and Herbert Gadsden, Jr. Her maternal grandparents, Rosalee Grant and Mannie Grant, Jr., were natives of Beaufort County, South Carolina, and had Sierra Leonean, Native American and Gullah heritage. Her paternal grandmother, Elizabeth Polite Gadsden, was the daughter of a chief from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. She married Herbert Gadsden, Sr., who owned a construction company and was a reverend in Beaufort County. Together, they had eight children. After marrying, her parents first moved to Elizabeth, New Jersey, but settled in the integrated upper middle class township of rural Edison, New Jersey. There, her father was the material controls manager for The Palnut Company while her mother worked for the General Motors Corporation. Gadsden-Williams began her education at James Madison Primary School in Edison, followed by James Madison Intermediate School and John Adams Junior High School.

Video Oral History Interview with Michelle Gadsden-Williams, Section A2013_185_001_002, TRT: 2:32:56 ?

Michelle Gadsden-Williams graduated from the predominately white John P. Stevens High School in 1987, and then attended the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City. After she was mugged during her first semester, she transferred to Kean College of New Jersey in Union, where she was inspired by communications professor Bailey Baker. During the summers, she worked as a sales representative at L. Bamberger and Company; and upon graduating in 1990, continued to work there, later serving as a junior manager. She then worked in customer service at Phillips-Van Heusen Corporation. In 1994, she was accepted into Wakefern Food Corporation's Leaders in Training program, where she was mentored by human resources executive, Ernie Bell. As a human resources administrator, she developed the company's diversity model based on advice from diversity strategist Ted Childs, Jr., and was promoted to diversity officer. In 2000, she joined Merck and Co., Inc.'s university relations division under director Angela Knight.

Video Oral History Interview with Michelle Gadsden-Williams, Section A2013_185_001_003, TRT: 3:29:35 ?

Michelle Gadsden-Williams worked in the university relations department at Merck and Co., Inc., where she recruited college students for their internship programs. She also designed programs for minority professional organizations like the NAACP. From there, she was recruited to Novartis Pharmaceuticals AG, where she served as executive director of diversity. She was later appointed vice president of global diversity for the entire company of 227,000 employees by her mentor, chairman Daniel Vasella. During that time, she oversaw a \$13 million budget in Switzerland. Returning to the United States, Gadsden-Williams then became the chief diversity officer in the Talent, Branding and Centre of Excellence division of the human resources department at Credit Suisse Group AG, where she emphasized the importance of diversity in the business sector. Gadsden-Williams concludes this portion of the interview by reflecting upon her legacy, and sharing her future plans. She also recalls meeting her husband, David Williams.

Video Oral History Interview with Michelle Gadsden-Williams, Section A2013_185_001_004, TRT: 4:32:11 ?

Michelle Gadsden-Williams was diagnosed with systemic lupus erythematosus in July of 2006. Following lifestyle changes, she went into remission in 2009. Gadsden-Williams reflects upon the future of diversity work in Corporate America, and talks about the support of her husband through her illness. At this

point in the interview, Gadsden-Williams' husband, David Williams, talks about his childhood and career. Williams was raised in a two parent household in East Orange, New Jersey, where he attended private schools. After graduating from high school in 1987, he joined AT&T Inc. in 1988 as a customer service representative, later serving as a product manager for business customers. He met Gadsden-Williams in 1990, and the two married in 1996. In 2007, he accepted AT&T Inc.'s early retirement package to support his wife's career abroad in Switzerland, where he managed the household activities; worked at a chemical company; and wrote a children's novel. Williams reflects upon his role in their marriage.

Video Oral History Interview with Michelle Gadsden-Williams, Section A2013_185_001_005, TRT: 5:15:41 ?

Michelle Gadsden-Williams narrates her photographs.