

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Debra Simmons

PERSON

Simmons, Debra Adams, 1964-

Alternative Names: Debra Simmons;

Life Dates: November 4, 1964-

Place of Birth: Hartford, Connecticut, USA

Residence: Copley, Ohio

Work: Washington, District of Columbia

Occupations: Journalist; Newspaper Executive

Biographical Note

Journalist and newspaper executive Debra Adams Simmons was born in Hartford, Connecticut. Simmons attended Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Public Communications and the College of Arts and Sciences, from which she received her B.A. degree. She is also a graduate of the Northwestern University Media Management Center's Advanced Executive Program in its Kellogg Graduate School of Management. Simmons had then planned to attend law school, but in 1986 was offered an internship at the local newspaper in Syracuse.

Simmons worked as a reporter and editor at the Hartford Courant, the Detroit Free Press, and the Virginian-Pilot. In 2003, she became managing editor of the Akron Beacon Journal, a Pulitzer prize-winning newspaper distributed throughout Northeast Ohio. Six months later she was appointed vice president of the newspaper. In 2007, Simmons was hired as managing editor of The Plain Dealer, Ohio's largest newspaper. Three years later, she was promoted to editor of The Plain Dealer, making her the only minority female running any of the nation's top twenty-five newspapers.

In 2014, Simmons became president of the Associated Press Media Editors. She has also served as the board chairman of the Youth Excellence Performing Arts Workshop, vice chair of the board of directors for Business Volunteers Unlimited: Center for Non-Profit Excellence, member of the board of directors of the American Society of News Editors, member of the National Association of Minority Media Executives, and member of the National Association of Black Journalists

For her journalistic and community achievements, Simmons has been given the Robert

McGruder Award for Diversity by Kent State University's School of Journalism and Mass Communications, named as one of Cleveland's 40 Under 40 leading executives in Northeast Ohio by Crain's, won the ATHENA award, and has been inducted into the Women of Color Hall of Fame.

Simmons lives in Copley, Ohio, with her husband, Jonathan. They have two sons; Jacob and Jonathan.

Simmons was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on February 11, 2014.

Related Entries

Annie-Fisher Multiple Intelligence M [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

South Catholic High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Syracuse University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

BA

Hartford College for Women [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

The Plain Dealer [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Editor

Akron Beacon Journal [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Managing Editor

Virginian Pilot [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Metro Editor

Detroit Free Press [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

public school reporter

Hartford Courant [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

public school reporter

Syracuse Herald-Journal [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1986 to ?]

Intern/Reporter

APME [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

ASNE [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

ATHENA International [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

IWMF [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Akron Art Museum [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Kym Sellers Foundation [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

YEPAW [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Hawken School [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Ideastream [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

College Now Greater Cleveland [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

City Club of Cleveland [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Kent State University Professional Advisory Board [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]