

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Donna Byrd

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Byrd, Donna, 1970-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Donna Byrd,
Dates:	January 31, 2014
Bulk Dates:	2014
Physical Description:	5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:22:51).
Abstract:	Publisher Donna Byrd (1970 -) assisted in launching BlackAmericaWeb.com, co-founded Kickoff Marketing, and was named publisher of TheRoot.com. Byrd was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on January 31, 2014, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2014_048
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Publisher Donna Byrd was born on April 26, 1970 in Fort Lee, Virginia. She was raised in a military family, grew up in North Carolina and Virginia, and graduated high school in Germany. Byrd received her B.A. degree in American government from the University of Virginia in 1992, and her M.B.A. degree from Duke University's Fuqua School of Business in 1996. She also studied business at the University of Cape Town in South Africa.

In 1992, Byrd was hired as an assistant sales manager for Procter & Gamble, where she worked until 1994. From 1996 to 1999, she served as a brand manager for the Coca-Cola Company, where she developed marketing and sales strategies. In 1999, Byrd was named vice president of marketing for EzGov.com. Then, in 2001, she helped Tom Joyner launch *BlackAmericaWeb.com*, one of the top three African American news and lifestyle websites. Byrd served as chief executive officer of *BlackAmericaWeb.com* until 2003, when she co-founded Kickoff Marketing, a strategic planning and brand firm, where she was managing partner for five years.

In 2008, Byrd was hired by *The Washington Post* and named publisher of *TheRoot.com*. She has received The Lucile Harris Bluford Spotlight Award, as well as an award from The Diva Lounge for her work as publisher of *TheRoot.com*. Byrd was also honored at the Diversity Affluence Brunch & Awards in 2012.

Donna Byrd was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on January 31, 2014.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Donna Byrd was conducted by Larry Crowe on January 31, 2014, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Publisher Donna Byrd (1970 -) assisted in launching BlackAmericaWeb.com, co-founded Kickoff Marketing, and was named publisher of TheRoot.com.

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:

Byrd, Donna, 1970-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Byrd, Donna, 1970---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Publisher

HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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 Donna Byrd, January 31, 2014. 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 Donna Byrd, Section A2014_048_001_001, TRT: 1:28:29 ?

Donna Byrd was born on April 26, 1970 in Fort Lee, Virginia to Diane Diggs Boyd and Melvin Boyd. Her paternal family was never enslaved, and descended from an interracial union in 18th century Virginia. Her father grew up in Suffolk, Virginia, and moved to Atlantic City, New Jersey in hopes of earning money to attend Morgan State College. While working, he befriended students from Howard University, and decided to study there instead. Byrd's maternal grandmother, Dorothy Diggs, belonged to the Native American Meherrin tribe. After the death of Byrd's maternal grandfather, Victor Diggs, she married Samuel Wilson, Jr., with whom she raised Byrd's mother in Norfolk, Virginia. Byrd's mother attended Morgan State College and was among the first women accepted to the Johns Hopkins Medical School, although her stepfather discouraged her from attending. Instead, she decided to serve in the American Red Cross during the Vietnam War. There, she met Byrd's father, who was the highest ranking black officer in his unit.

Video Oral History Interview with Donna Byrd, Section A2014_048_001_002, TRT: 2:28:06 ?

Donna Byrd's father, Melvin Boyd, joined the Reserve Officers Training Corps at Howard University, and entered the U.S. Army upon graduating in 1953. While serving in the Vietnam War, he met Byrd's mother, Diane Diggs Boyd, who was an American Red Cross worker. They married and moved to Fort Lee, Virginia, and then to Quantico, Virginia and Alexandria, Virginia, where they raised Byrd and her three siblings. They attended Protestant services on the military base in Alexandria, and visited museums in Washington, D.C. after church. Although her family was one of two African American households in the community, Byrd was treated with kindness by her white neighbors, and did not experience discrimination until the age of six years old, when she was excluded from a classmate's birthday party. When Byrd was ten years old, her family moved to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and then to Warrenton, Virginia and Heidelberg, Germany, where she graduated from high school.

Video Oral History Interview with Donna Byrd, Section A2014_048_001_003, TRT: 3:28:35 ?

Donna Byrd enrolled at James K. Polk Elementary School in 1976, four years after the start of busing in Alexandria, Virginia. She enjoyed gymnastics, and worked as a babysitter from an early age. Byrd attended Patrick Henry Middle School for one year before moving to Fort Bragg, North Carolina for her father's military career. Next, Byrd's family moved to Warrenton, Virginia, where she attended Warrenton Junior High School and Fauquier High School. With the encouragement of her English teacher, Byrd began participating in oratorical contests, which helped her overcome her stutter. Byrd's family then moved to Heidelberg, Germany, where she attended Heidelberg American High School on the base. She was elected class treasurer during her first year there. Byrd traveled throughout Europe as a teenager, and once accompanied her father to East Berlin. Upon graduating in 1988, she decided to enroll at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.

Video Oral History Interview with Donna Byrd, Section A2014_048_001_004, TRT: 4:29:08 ?

Donna Byrd decided to attend the University of Virginia rather than the College of William and Mary based on her interactions with students from each school. However, when she arrived on campus in Charlottesville, she found that some of her white peers harbored racist views, and that the university's Honor System resulted in the disproportionate expulsion of black students. In response, Byrd campaigned successfully for a seat on the honor board during her first year. She later served as the board's chairperson, and initiated a study that revealed racial bias in the reporting of honor code infringements. Byrd also founded Nights of the Roundtable, a series of discussions about ethics and race. After graduating in 1992, she returned to Alexandria, Virginia as a sales representative for the Procter and Gamble Company. Byrd enrolled at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business in 1994. She studied abroad at the University of Cape Town in South Africa in 1995, one year after President Nelson Mandela's election.

Video Oral History Interview with Donna Byrd, Section A2014_048_001_005, TRT: 5:28:33 ?

Donna Byrd studied briefly at the University of Cape Town in South Africa before graduating from Duke University's Fuqua School of Business in 1996. She joined The Coca-Cola Company in Atlanta, Georgia, where she worked as a brand manager for Coca-Cola Classic. Byrd then transferred to the new brands team, where she focused on marketing Coca-Cola Citra and helped develop a new water brand called Dasani. After a successful year, Byrd expected a promotion, but was instead transferred back to the Coca-Cola Classic team, where she met radio host Tom Joyner. In 1999, Byrd decided to leave The Coca-Cola Company in order to work at EzGov, Inc., a startup company that made

government services available online. She worked as a sales representative, and sold the service to state and local governments throughout the country. In 2001, Byrd's former colleague, Tom Joyner, created Black America Web, an online news source for African Americans. After a few attempts, he eventually convinced Byrd to join the company.