

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Tonya Lewis Lee

PERSON

Lee, Tonya Lewis

Alternative Names: Tonya Lewis Lee;

Life Dates: March 30, 1966-

Place of Birth: New York, New York, USA

Residence: New York, NY

Occupations: Producer

Biographical Note

Producer, author and lawyer Tonya Lewis Lee was born on March 30, 1966 to Lillian Glenn Lewis and George Lewis, a corporate executive at Philip Morris. Lee received her B.A. degree from Sarah Lawrence College in 1988, and her J.D. degree from the University of Virginia School of Law in 1991.

Upon graduation, Lee worked at the law firm of Nixon, Hargrave, Devans & Doyle (now Nixon Peabody LLP) in Washington, D.C., where she primarily serviced Gannett Co., Inc. on corporate and First Amendment issues. In 1992, during the Congressional Black Caucus Weekend in Washington, D.C., Lee met her future husband, Spike Lee. A year later, they were married in New York City in a private ceremony.

In 1998, Lee founded the media production company, Madstone Company, Inc., where she worked with Disney Television Animation and Nickelodeon. Lee produced the 2004 documentary, *I Sit Where I Want: The Legacy of Brown v. Board of Education*, which won the Beacon and Parents' Choice awards. In 2005, she executively produced the TV miniseries, *Miracle's Boys*. Then, in 2006, Lee worked with TV Land to produce the talk show, *That's What I'm Talking About*, which was hosted by Wayne Brady. The following year, Lee became the spokesperson for the Office of Minority Health's campaign, "A Healthy Baby Begins With You," which addressed the high infant mortality rate in the United States; and she then produced a documentary about the campaign, *Crisis in the Crib: Saving Our Nation's Babies*. In 2012, she co-founded the film and television production company, ToniK Productions, which produced Lee's co-written screenplay, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*.

Outspoken on the issues of women and race, Lee has had a speaking tour schedule and has appeared on national and local television and radio stations across the United

States. She has written for magazines such as Avenue, Gotham, O at Home and Glamour. She has also been featured in The New York Times, Avenue, Town and Country, New York Magazine, O, Essence, Ebony, NV Magazine, Redbook, Child and New York Family Magazine. Lee is co-author, with Crystal McCrary, of the 2004 novel Gotham Diaries, and has co-authored three books with Spike Lee: Please, Baby, Please (2002); Please, Puppy, Please (2004); and Giant Steps to Change the World (2011).

Lee resides in New York City with her husband and their two children, Satchel and Jackson.

Tonya Lewis Lee was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on April 6, 2014.

Related Entries

Sarah Lawrence College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.A.

University of Virginia School of Law [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

J.D.

Nixon Peabody LLP [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1991 to ?]

Madstone Company, Inc. [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1998 to ?]

Founder

ToniK Productions [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2012 to ?]

Co-Founder