

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Randall Pinkston

PERSON

Pinkston, Randall

Alternative Names: Randall Pinkston;

Life Dates: March 3, 1950-

Place of Birth: Holly Bluff, Mississippi, USA

Residence: Teaneck, New Jersey

Work: Baltimore, Maryland

Occupations: Broadcast Journalist

Biographical Note

Broadcast journalist Randall Pinkston was born on March 3, 1950 in Yazoo County, Mississippi. His mother's aunt, a retired domestic worker, and her husband, a construction worker, raised Pinkston as their son in Jackson, Mississippi. As a child, Pinkston was fascinated by radio broadcast news. After graduating from Lanier High School in 1968, Pinkston attended Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, where he joined the campus radio station, WESU-FM. Pinkston left Wesleyan University after the death of his grand-uncle and completed his undergraduate studies at Millsaps College, where he received his B.A. degree in history in 1973. While attending college, Pinkston worked part-time at WJDX-FM and AM, and, in 1971, was hired as Saturday night anchor and producer for WLBT-TV in Jackson.

In August of 1973, after attending the Michelle Clark Fellowship Program for Minority Journalists at Columbia University, Pinkston was promoted to WLBT's 6:00 PM newscast, the first African American to anchor the #1 newscast at Mississippi's #1 television station. In 1974, he accepted a position with Post-Newsweek Station WJXT-TV, a CBS affiliate in Jacksonville, Florida, as the urban affairs director and producer. In 1976, Pinkston transferred to Post-Newsweek's WFSB-TV in Hartford, Connecticut, where he held posts as anchor, reporter and producer of public affairs programs.

While working in Hartford, he earned his J.D. degree from the University of Connecticut School of Law in 1980. That same year, Pinkston was hired as a correspondent with WCBS-TV, where he worked until 1990 when he was appointed as a CBS News White House correspondent. Pinkston reported on stories of national and international significance from the Persian Gulf War to the nomination of Justice

Clarence Thomas. In 1994, he moved to the CBS New York news bureau and served as a correspondent for CBS Evening News as well as a contributor, reporter and correspondent for other CBS news broadcasts, including CBS Reports, CBS 48 Hours, and CBS Sunday Morning. In 2013, Pinkston ended a thirty-three year career with CBS. His final report included an interview with Myrlie Evers Williams on Medgar Evers' efforts to open broadcasting to minorities.

After CBS, Pinkston worked as an adjunct professor at the City University of New York School of Journalism and The University of Mississippi Meek School of Journalism, and as a freelance journalist for Al Jazeera America.

Pinkston's work was first recognized by the Great New York Safety Council for his reporting on underage drunk driving and its influence in the shaping of New York state law on underage drinking and driving. He is the recipient of a national Emmy award and an Edward R. Murrow Award for his work on CBS Reports' "Legacy of Shame," and two other national Emmy awards for reporting on the death of Princess Diana and the TWA Flight 800 disaster. He has also received a Community Service Award from the Society of Professional Journalists for a report on the aids crisis among African Americans.

Pinkston lives with his wife, Patricia McLain, in Teaneck, New Jersey.

Randall Pinkston was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on June 16, 2014.

Related Entries

Lanier High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Millsaps College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.A.

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

J.D.

WJDX Radio [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Part-Time Employee

WLBT-TV [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1971 to 1973]

Saturday Night Anchor and Producer

WLBT-TV [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1973 to 1974]

Anchor

WJXT-TV [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1974 to 1976]

Urban Affairs Director and Producer

WFSB-TV [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1976 to 1980]

Anchor, Reporter and Producer of Public Affairs Programs

WCBS-TV [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1980 to 1990]

Correspondent

CBS News [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1990 to 1994]

White House Correspondent

CBS News New York [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1994 to 2013]

Correspondent, Reporter and Contributor

City University of New York School of Journalism [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 2013 to ?]

Adjunct Professor

University of Mississippi Meek School of Journalism [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 2013 to ?]

Adjunct Professor

Al Jazeera America [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 2013 to ?]

Freelance Journalist