

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Sheila Robinson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Robinson, Sheila, 1961-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Sheila Robinson,
Dates:	August 15, 2014
Bulk Dates:	2014
Physical Description:	5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:09:04).
Abstract:	Marketing chief executive and publisher Sheila Robinson (1961 -) was the founder, publisher and CEO of Diversity Woman magazine and author of the book <i>Lead By Example: An Insiders Look at How to Successfully Lead in Corporate America and Entrepreneurship</i> . Robinson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 15, 2014, in Burlington, North Carolina. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2014_180
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Marketing chief executive and publisher Sheila A. Robinson was born on September 20, 1961 in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. She graduated from Parkland Senior High School in Winston-Salem in 1979, and went on to receive her B.A. degree in pre-law/political science from North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina in 1986. Robinson later received her Masters of Entrepreneurship (M.S.E.) degree from Western Carolina University in 2011, as well as a Chief Learning Officer Certificate from the University of Pennsylvania in 2013. In 2012, she entered the Chief Learning Officer Ed.D. program at the University of Pennsylvania. She has also completed Stanford University's Professional Publishing Program.

From 1987 to 1989, Robinson worked for R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company as a market research assistant. In 1990, she was hired by DuPont, where she went on to serve as a marketing director with the company's apparel division. When her division at DuPont was sold in 2004, Robinson established Robinson & Associates Communications, LLC and became founder and publisher of *North Carolina Career Network* magazine. In 2007, Robinson expanded *Career Network* nationally and launched *Diversity Woman* magazine, where she served as chief executive officer and publisher. Robinson also hosted the Diversity Women's Business Conference and founded Iamaleader.org, the nonprofit extension of *Diversity Woman* in 2012.

In 2009, Robinson was honored with a Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference Image Award for her career achievements and for being a positive role model for young women. She was named in 2009 as one of the Top 50 Women in Magazine Publishing by *Publishing Executive*. Robinson was also the keynote speaker at the 2008 wives luncheon at the NFL Pro Bowl, and was honored as the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce Minority Business Person of the Year in 2011. Her *Diversity Woman* magazine was nominated for The 2011 North Carolina Small Business of The Year.

Robinson is a member of the National Association for Female Executives and the National Association for Women Business Owners, and serves on the boards of Women in Periodical Publishing and Business and Professional Women. She is the author of *Lead By Example: An Insiders Look at How to Successfully Lead in Corporate America and Entrepreneurship*, which was published in 2014.

Sheila Robinson was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 15, 2014.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Sheila Robinson was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 15, 2014, in Burlington, North Carolina, and was recorded on 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Marketing chief executive and publisher Sheila Robinson (1961 -) was the founder, publisher and CEO of Diversity Woman magazine and author of the book *Lead By Example: An Insiders Look at How to Successfully Lead in Corporate America and Entrepreneurship*.

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:

Robinson, Sheila, 1961-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Robinson, Sheila, 1961---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Publisher

Marketing Chief Executive

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 Sheila Robinson, August 15, 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 Sheila Robinson, Section A2014_180_001_001, TRT: 1:28:13 ?

Sheila Robinson was born on September 20, 1961 in Winston-Salem, North Carolina to Mildred Wilson Thomas and Seth Cunningham, Jr. Her mother was born in Kingstree, South Carolina, and began travelling to New York City at thirteen years old to earn money for her college education. She studied to become a teacher at the Winston-Salem Teachers College, and later earned a master's degree at the Appalachian State Teachers College in Boone, North Carolina. Unable to find a teaching position in Winston-Salem, Robinson's mother commuted to work at a school in Danville, Virginia. Robinson's father was born in Lancaster, South Carolina to farmers Hester Cunningham and Seth Cunningham, Sr. His family migrated to Winston-Salem, where he worked at R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company and met Robinson's mother. After marrying, the couple settled on the east side of Winston-Salem, where they raised Robinson and her sisters, Darlene Cunningham Crawford and Sharon Cunningham, in a predominantly African American neighborhood.

Video Oral History Interview with Sheila Robinson, Section A2014_180_001_002, TRT: 2:27:39 ?

Sheila Robinson's family belonged to the congregation of the St. Paul United Methodist Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. She began her education at Jefferson Davis Diggs Elementary School, and was a talkative child who exhibited leadership skills from a young age. From there, Robinson attended Mineral Springs Middle School, Griffith High School and Hill High School. She completed the eleventh and twelfth grades at Parkland Senior High School, where she joined the varsity cheerleading team. She was elected team captain despite opposition from the cheerleading coach; but, when the team was photographed for an article in the Winston-Salem Journal, the white co-captain was featured instead. In addition to cheerleading, Robinson also joined the band and chorus. After graduation, Robinson aspired to a career in law. She enrolled in pre-law and political science courses at North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina, and also joined the cheerleading team during her freshman year.

Video Oral History Interview with Sheila Robinson, Section A2014_180_001_003, TRT: 3:27:33 ?

Sheila Robinson entered North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina in 1979. With the guidance of professors Tyrone R. Baines and Joseph Aicher, Robinson changed her major from pre-law to public administration. In 1983, she left college without graduating, and found work in the claims division of the Home Security Life Insurance Company. She returned to North Carolina Central University in 1985, and completed her final year in 1986. Then, Robinson worked at Liggett and Myers Tobacco, followed by the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company. In 1989, she secured an administrative position at DuPont Textiles and Interiors, the textile division of E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company, which was located in Kinston, North Carolina. She was eventually promoted to marketing director, and began working with magazines like Lucky and Glamour. She also met fashion designer Zac Posen and Spanx creator Sara Blakely, and attended the Council of Fashion Designers of America Awards in New York City.

Video Oral History Interview with Sheila Robinson, Section A2014_180_001_004, TRT: 4:28:29 ?

Sheila Robinson was promoted to director of public relations for the apparel division of E. I du Pont de Nemours and Company. In this role, she was responsible for marketing Lycra, the company's spandex textile brand. Robinson was laid off in 2004, when E. I du Pont de Nemours and Company sold their

newly rebranded textiles division, Invista. In 2005, she founded Robinson and Associates Communications, LLC and the North Carolina Career Network, a magazine focused on the major industries in North Carolina. Robinson attended a yearlong program at Stanford University to learn more about the publishing industry, and then rebranded the North Carolina Career Network as Diversity Woman. She featured BET co-founder Sheila C. Johnson on the magazine's first cover. In 2011, Robinson earned a master's degree from Western Carolina University, and began her doctoral studies at the University of Pennsylvania. In 2014, she published 'Lead by Example: An Insiders Look at How to Successfully Lead in Corporate America.'

Video Oral History Interview with Sheila Robinson, Section A2014_180_001_005, TRT: 5:17:10 ?

Sheila Robinson was the founder of I Am A Leader, a non-profit organization that provided career counseling to high school and college students. Robinson also made numerous public speaking appearances, and served as the keynote speaker at events like the NFL Pro Bowl's wives luncheon in 2008. Robinson talks about her concerns for the African American community and her role as a mother to her daughter, Leah Robinson. She also reflects upon her life and legacy, and concludes the interview by describing how she would like to be remembered.