

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Joanne V. Gabbin

PERSON

Gabbin, Joanne V.

**Alternative Names:** Joanne V. Gabbin;

**Life Dates:** February 2, 1946-

**Place of Birth:** Baltimore, Maryland, USA

**Residence:** Harrisonburg, Virginia

**Work:** Harrisonburg, Virginia

**Occupations:** Poet

## Biographical Note

English professor Joanne V. Gabbin was born on February 2, 1946. She earned her B.A. degree in English from Morgan State College in Baltimore, Maryland in 1967. Gabbin then received her M.A. degree in English in 1970 and her Ph.D. degree in English and literature from the University of Chicago in Chicago, Illinois in 1980.

Gabbin began her career as an instructor of English at Roosevelt University in Chicago, Illinois in 1971. She was then hired as an assistant professor of English at Chicago State University in Chicago, Illinois in 1972, where she remained until 1974. Gabbin served as program director and instructor of Catalyst for Youth, Inc. in Chicago, Illinois from 1973 to 1975. In 1977, Gabbin became an assistant professor of English at Lincoln University. She was promoted to the position of associate professor of English in 1982. Gabbin remained in that position until 1985, when she was hired as an associate professor of English at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. In 1987, she helped form the Wintergreen Women Writers' Collective. Gabbin also became the director of the honors program at James Madison University in 1986 and was promoted to the position of professor of English in 1989. Gabbin organized the first academic conference on African American poetry, entitled "Furious Flower: A Revolution in African American Poetry," in 1994. She established the Furious Flower Poetry Center at James Madison University in 2005.

In addition to her work as an English professor, Gabbin also published a variety of works that included Sterling A. Brown: Building the Black Aesthetic Tradition, The Furious Flowering of African American Poetry, and Furious Flower: African American Poetry from the Black Arts Movement to the Present. She also published a children's

book, titled *I Bet She Called Me Sugar Plum*, in 2004.

Gabbin was awarded the Creative Scholarship Award by the College Language Association in 1986 and, in 1988, received the Award for Scholarship from the James Madison University Faculty Women's Caucus and Women's Resource Network. She was the recipient of the Virginia State Council of Higher Education's Outstanding Faculty Award in 1993, as well as James Madison University's Provost Award for Excellence in 2004. Gabbin was given the Distinguished Faculty Award in 2005, and the Woman of Distinction Award in 2007, each from James Madison University.

In addition to her career as a professor, Gabbin served as a board member of several organizations that included the WVPT Community Board, Shenandoah Shakespeare, the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, and Cave Canem (A Home for Black Poetry). An avid art collector, she is also the owner of the 150 Franklin Street Gallery in Harrisonburg.

Joanne V. Gabbin was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on May 15, 2017.

## Related Entries

**Eastern High School** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**Morgan State University** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**University of Chicago** [STUDENTOF]  
[from ? to ?]

**DHEW, Social Security** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1967 to 1969]

**Reporter**

**Chicago State University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1972 to 1972]

**Teacher**

**Lincoln University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1977 to 1986]

**Teacher**

**James Madison University** [EMPLOYEEOF]  
[from 1986 to ?]

**Director**

**Virginia Foundation for Humanities** [MEMBEROF]  
[from 1993 to 2002]

**Board**

**Cave Canem** [MEMBEROF]

[from 1998 to 2006]

**Board**

**Arts Council of the Valley** [MEMBEROf]  
[from 2016 to ?]

**Board**