

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Gwendolyn Quinn

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Quinn, Gwendolyn, 1960-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Gwendolyn Quinn,
<b>Dates:</b>	March 29, 2017
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2017
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:36:48).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Public relations expert Gwendolyn Quinn (1960 - ) was vice president of publicity at Capitol Records and was founder and CEO of GQ Media & Public Relations. Quinn was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 29, 2017, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2017_078
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Public relations expert Gwendolyn Quinn was born on November 12, 1960 in Augusta, Georgia to Queen Esther Bradshaw and Lonnie Edward Quinn. Quinn graduated from Potomac High School in Oxon Hill, Maryland in 1978, and received her cosmetology license from Robert Fiance Beauty School in New York.

After graduating from high school, Quinn served as the personal assistant to recording artist and performer, Gloria Gaynor. Quinn entered the music industry by joining the television and radio staff at the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers. She was then recruited as a personal assistant to Beverly Johnson, after which she joined ABC-Capitol Cities and worked for several years in positions related to television development and production. In 1991, Quinn joined Mercury/PolyGram as its publicity coordinator. The company worked with artists such as Vanessa Williams, Oleta Adams, and Third World. She then joined Flavor Unit Entertainment as the national director of publicity, creating campaigns for artists such as Naughty By Nature, Zhané, and Queen Latifah. Quinn was named national director of publicity and media relations at Capitol Records in 1995. Two years later, she worked as senior director of publicity for Island Records, and worked with the Isley Brothers, and Dru Hill, among others. The following year, Quinn joined Arista Records as senior director of publicity, and organized campaigns for artists such as Aretha Franklin, Whitney Houston, Deborah Cox, and Monica. When Arista Records and Bad Boy Entertainment launched joint ventures, Quinn was responsible for the artists' media campaigns. These artists included P. Diddy, Notorious B.I.G., Faith Evans, and Mase. Quinn handled media and press activities for the company. Quinn then returned to Capitol Records as vice president of publicity. In 2002, Quinn founded her own firm, GQ Media & Public Relations (now Gwendolyn Quinn Public Relations).

Quinn was the founder and creator of the African American Public Relations Collective (AAPRC) and the Global Communicator. She also was a contributor to *Souls Revealed* and featured in *Handle Your Entertainment Business*. She was the curator of The Living Legends Foundation: The State of Black Music and Beyond, an essay series published by the *Huffington Post*.

Gwendolyn Quinn was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on March 29, 2017.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Gwendolyn Quinn was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 29, 2017, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Public relations expert Gwendolyn Quinn (1960 - ) was vice president of publicity at Capitol Records and was founder and CEO of GQ Media & Public Relations.

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## 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Quinn, Gwendolyn, 1960-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Quinn, Gwendolyn, 1960- --Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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## The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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### Occupations:

Public Relations Expert

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### HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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## 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 Gwendolyn Quinn, March 29, 2017. 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Gwendolyn Quinn, Section A2017\_078\_001\_001, TRT: 1:28:29 ?

Gwendolyn Quinn was born on November 12, 1960 in Augusta, Georgia to Queen Bradshaw Quinn and Lonnie Quinn, Sr. Her mother was born in the early 1930s to Fannie Bradshaw, a seamstress who lived in Abbeville, Georgia. Quinn's mother attended Paine College in Augusta, and then earned a practical

nursing license in Chicago, Illinois. Her father was also born in Abbeville, the son of an auto mechanic and a domestic named Alene Lacey Lempley. Quinn's parents met in Abbeville at seven years old, and eventually married. Shortly after Quinn was born, they moved to Newark, New Jersey, where her mother was active in the Civil Rights Movement. Quinn's family left Newark after the riots of 1967, and moved to Southeast Washington, D.C., where her father worked as a hospital aide. Quinn began her education at Draper Elementary School, and went on to attend Charles Hart Junior High School, where she was influenced by her civics teacher. She enjoyed listening to soul music and programs like 'Quiet Storm' on WHUR Radio.

Video Oral History Interview with Gwendolyn Quinn, Section A2017\_078\_001\_002, TRT: 2:27:15 ?

Gwendolyn Quinn attended the all-black Frank W. Ballou Senior High School in Southeast Washington, D.C. Around this time, she learned to braid hair, and found work in a salon. After the tenth grade, Quinn's family moved to Oxon Hill, Maryland. She transferred to the integrated Potomac High School, where she took typing and college preparatory courses. After graduating in 1978, Quinn moved to New York City, where she enrolled at the Robert Fiance Hair Design Institute. She also worked as a freelance stylist and braider for celebrity clients like disco singer Gloria Gaynor. In 1980, Quinn accompanied Gaynor to Europe for the 'I Will Survive' promotional tour. After one year, Quinn returned to New York City, where she entered the hair colorist training program at the Sassoon Salon. She was the second African American stylist to enroll, and was mentored by her predecessor, John Atchinson. Quinn also talks about the emergence of go-go music during the 1970s in Washington, D.C.

Video Oral History Interview with Gwendolyn Quinn, Section A2017\_078\_001\_003, TRT: 3:30:18 ?

Gwendolyn Quinn completed a two-year apprenticeship at the Sassoon Salon in New York City. Then, she joined the television division of the American Society of Composers, Authors and, Publishers, where she oversaw royalty payments to theme song authors for hit shows like 'I Love Lucy.' After three years, Quinn was hired as the assistant to black supermodel Beverly Johnson. Then, she joined Capital Cities/ABC Inc., where she became a coordinator in the telecommunications department. In 1991, Quinn moved to the black music division of Mercury/PolyGram Records, where she worked as a publicity coordinator. In that role, she oversaw the press for artists like Vanessa Williams. However, Quinn was eventually fired over a conflict with a white publicity executive. She obtained a position at the hip hop label Flavor Unit Entertainment, where she was mentored by the owners, Shakim Compere and Queen Latifah. In 1995, Quinn was named the national director of media and public relations at Capitol Records.

Video Oral History Interview with Gwendolyn Quinn, Section A2017\_078\_001\_004, TRT: 4:29:51 ?

Gwendolyn Quinn left the black-owned Flavor Unit Entertainment to join Capitol Records in 1995. During the hiring process, a white journalist tried to convince the executives to reject her, but Quinn defended her position and was hired as the label's national director of media and public relations. In this role, she was responsible for publicizing artists like BeBe and CeCe Winans. In 1996, Capitol Records dismantled the black music division, and Quinn joined the majority-black Island Records label. She went on to work for Clive Davis at Arista Records, where she handled the press for artists like Whitney Houston and Aretha Franklin. At this point in the interview, Quinn talks about her clients'

preference for black publications like Ebony and Essence. In 2001, Quinn returned to Capitol Records as vice president of the black music division, but the company soon dismantled the division again. In 2002, Quinn founded GQ Media and Public Relations Inc., where she represented Aretha Franklin.

Video Oral History Interview with Gwendolyn Quinn, Section A2017\_078\_001\_005, TRT: 5:29:03  
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Gwendolyn Quinn worked as a publicity director at Arista Records during the 1990s. During that time, she managed the press for Aretha Franklin at events like the taping of 'VH1 Divas.' Quinn later became the vice president of urban music at Capitol Records, but left after the division was dismantled in 2001. In 2002, she founded GQ Media and Public Relations, where she represented artists like Chaka Khan and Aretha Franklin. In 2004, Quinn organized launched the African American Public Relations Collective, which was an informal affinity group for black publicists. The collective published the Global Communicator magazine, which included interviews with successful African Americans in the media industry like publicist Ofield Dukes and journalists Gwen Ifill and Soledad O'Brien. At this point in the interview, Quinn talks about the importance of black representation for black artists, and remembers working with Whitney Houston. Quinn concludes this part of the interview by reflecting upon her life.

Video Oral History Interview with Gwendolyn Quinn, Section A2017\_078\_001\_006, TRT: 6:11:52  
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Gwendolyn Quinn talks about her family, and reflects upon her legacy and the changes in the music industry. She describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community, and concludes her interview by describing how she would like to be remembered.