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### Julieanna L. Richardson, Founder and Executive Director, The HistoryMakers

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Born June 10, 1954 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, **Julieanna L. Richardson** created a unique path to heading up the largest national collection effort of African American video oral histories on record. With a diverse background in theatre, television production and the cable television industries, she combined her various work experiences and her passion for history to conceptualize, found and build *The HistoryMakers*.



#### Education

Richardson graduated from Brandeis University in 1976 with a B.A. in Theatre Arts and American Studies. It was during her studies at Brandeis that she first experienced the power of oral history, while conducting independent research on the Harlem Renaissance. While exploring the collections of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City, Richardson interviewed Butterfly McQueen and Lee Whipper as part of her project. Having access to these poignant life stories "made the history really come alive for me," says Richardson. From this early exposure, the seeds for *The HistoryMakers* project first took root.

#### Career

Richardson received her J.D. in 1980 from Harvard Law School. She worked as a corporate lawyer at Jenner & Block prior to serving in the early 1980s as the Cable Administrator for the City of Chicago's Office of Cable Communications. There she established the Chicago Cable Commission, the City's regulatory body. She went on to found *Shop Chicago*, a regionally based home shopping channel. For eight years, her production company, SCTN Teleproductions, managed three local cable channels for TCI, the nation's largest cable operator. SCTN Teleproductions served as the production arm for C-SPAN. Its clients also included GATX, Peoples Energy, ESPN, the Economic Club of Chicago, AT&T Broadband, and Prime Cable.

#### The History Makers

*The HistoryMakers* is a national, 501(c)(3) non-profit educational institution based in Chicago, committed to preserving, developing and providing easy access to an internationally recognized, archival collection of thousands of African American video oral histories. Richardson serves as the Founder and Executive Director of *The HistoryMakers*.

Richardson founded *The HistoryMakers* in 1999, which over seven years has quickly grown into a vibrant national initiative. The goal of *The HistoryMakers* is to create, over a five year period, a unique, one-of-a-kind national video archive of 5,000 first person narratives of African American *HistoryMakers*, both well known and unsung. This would represent the single largest archival project of its kind since the recording of former slaves during the WPA period of the 1930s. The purpose of this archive is to educate and to show the breadth and depth of this important American history as told by the first person; to highlight the accomplishments of individual African Americans across a variety of disciplines; to showcase those who have played a role in African American led movements and/or organizations; and to preserve this material for years and generations to come, creating a *priceless* collection. *The HistoryMakers* website can be found at [www.thehistorymakers.com](http://www.thehistorymakers.com).

Julieanna Richardson resides in Chicago. The University of Illinois at Chicago's Great Cities Institute recently named Julieanna Richardson the first Vernon D. Jarrett Fellow.

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Photo & Bio Courtesy of The HistoryMakers

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