

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Terrie Williams

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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>	Williams, Terrie
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Terrie Williams,
<b>Dates:</b>	September 17, 2004
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2004
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:30:26).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Author and public relations chief executive Terrie Williams (1954 - ) was the founder of the Terrie Williams Agency, a public relations firm that has represented notables such as Miles Davis, Eddie Murphy, Janet Jackson, Russell Simmons, and Johnnie Cochran. In addition to her public relations work, Williams is also involved in youth social work; she has authored motivational books that are used by schools nationally, and co-founded the Stay Strong Foundation, a nonprofit aimed at helping teens. Williams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 17, 2004, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2004_165
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Author and public relations entrepreneur Terrie Williams was born in Mt. Vernon, New York, on May 12, 1954. Williams attended Pennington Grade School, where one of her fellow classmates was actor Denzel Washington, and graduated in three years from Mt. Vernon High School in 1971. Williams attended Brandeis University following high school, earning her B.S. degree in psychology in 1975, and then attended Columbia University, where she earned her master's degree in social work.

After working for a number of years as a social worker, Williams founded the Terrie Williams Agency in 1988, after meeting Miles Davis in the hospital. Williams began representing Davis, and her next big client, Eddie Murphy; since that time, she has gone on to represent superstars such as Janet Jackson, Russell Simmons, Johnnie Cochran, Stephen King, and Sally Jesse Raphael, as well as organizations such as HBO and Essence Communications. The Terrie Williams Agency went on to become a division of PGP Communications, where Williams served as vice chair.

Williams authored three books: *The Personal Touch: What You Really Need to Succeed in Today's Fast-paced Business World*, *Stay Strong: Simple Life Lessons for Teens* and *A Plentiful Harvest: Creating Balance and Harmony Through the Seven Living Virtues*. *Stay Strong* has been used nationwide in schools, and was the catalyst for launching the Stay Strong Foundation, a nationwide non-profit organization for youth.

Williams was a highly sought-after speaker, speaking at engagements with Fortune 500 companies, universities, and numerous other organizations. Williams is the recipient of several awards, including being the first African American to win the New York Women in Communications Matrix Award, and the Citizen's Committee for the

New York Marietta Tree Award for Public Service.

In 1998, Williams donated her papers to the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University, making them the first gift of papers donated in the public relations field.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Terrie Williams was conducted by Larry Crowe on September 17, 2004, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Author and public relations chief executive Terrie Williams (1954 - ) was the founder of the Terrie Williams Agency, a public relations firm that has represented notables such as Miles Davis, Eddie Murphy, Janet Jackson, Russell Simmons, and Johnnie Cochran. In addition to her public relations work, Williams is also involved in youth social work; she has authored motivational books that are used by schools nationally, and co-founded the Stay Strong Foundation, a nonprofit aimed at helping teens.

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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:

Williams, Terrie

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Williams, Terrie--Interviews

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African American businesspeople--Interviews

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African American women public relations personnel--Interviews

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Youth workers--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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Terrie Williams Agency

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## **Occupations:**

Author

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Public Relations Chief Executive

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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 Terrie Williams, September 17, 2004. 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 Terrie Williams, Section A2004\_165\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:41 ?

Terrie Williams was born on May 12, 1954 in Mount Vernon, New York. Her mother, Marie Kearney Williams, was born in Warrenton, North Carolina in 1932 and grew up in a sharecropping family. Williams' maternal grandmother, Laura Basket Kearney Davis, struggled to raise nine children during the Great Depression when her husband left them. Davis' mother was Native American. Charles Williams, Williams' father, was born in 1928 in Norlina, North Carolina. He dropped out of school in seventh grade to provide for his family when his father left. Her parents married and moved to Mount Vernon, and Williams' father worked as a trucker. When he was let go from the company, he started his own, Westchester New York Express. As a young child, Williams was jealous of her baby sister and the Jewish holidays celebrated at her nursery school. She was raised in Mount Vernon and attended Robert Fulton Elementary School then Pennington Elementary School where Denzel Washington was a classmate. She had many influential teachers.

African American businesspeople--Interviews.

African American women public relations personnel--Interviews.

Youth workers--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Terrie Williams, Section A2004\_165\_001\_002, TRT: 0:30:21 ?

Terrie Williams was raised to focus on achievement, which kept her from developing a strong social life or hobbies in her youth. Her family regularly visited relatives in North Carolina where Williams disliked using the outhouse. She did not encounter signs of formal segregation there, though her mother shared her memories of the racism in the South. Williams frequently visited museums in New York City and was exposed to arts and culture. She also would visit a horse ranch with her father. After attending Nichols Junior High School, Williams entered Mount Vernon High School and graduated from it in three years. She was a member of the Keyette Club and her junior year, participated in an exchange program where she lived in Colombia, South America for the summer. Williams speaks candidly about her battle with depression, which led her to write about her experience in 'A Plentiful Harvest: Creating Balance and Harmony Through the Seven Living Virtues' and focus on developing hobbies and interests as an adult.

Video Oral History Interview with Terrie Williams, Section A2004\_165\_001\_003, TRT: 0:29:41 ?

Terrie Williams majored in psychology and sociology at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts. At Brandeis, Williams won the David Aranow Award for an outstanding student pursuing social work studies and had an influential sociology course taught by Maurice R. Stein. Working at a state mental institution for a semester led her to question her decision to enter social work, though. Williams pursued her master's degree at Columbia University School of

Social Work in New York, New York. She trained at the psychiatric department of Harlem Hospital Center and New York Hospital, counseling terminally ill patients and their families. She encountered Miles Davis while he was a patient, and he questioned her about her career. After reading an article, Williams decided to pursue public relations. She worked for a year at the newly-formed Black Filmmakers Foundation, then was hired as director of public relations for Essence. She left to start her own company with Eddie Murphy as her first client.

Video Oral History Interview with Terrie Williams, Section A2004\_165\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:56 ?

Terrie Williams worked at Essence magazine for five years, starting in 1983. She left the company to found the Terrie Williams Agency, and Eddie Murphy became her first public relations client. Over the years, Williams has represented celebrities including Miles Davis, Anita Baker, Janet Jackson, Wesley Snipes, Martin Lawrence, HistoryMakers Reverend Al Sharpton, Reginald Hudlin and Warrington Hudlin, among many others. She used her background in psychology to understand the challenges of being a celebrity, the need to maintain honesty with clients and the importance of personal attention. Williams became involved with a colleague's organization, the Recycling Inspiration movement, where celebrities give awards they received to young people with an inspirational note. Williams has written three books to share her professional knowledge and life lessons, including one in 2000, 'Stay Strong: Simple Life Lessons for Teens.' She also uses her organization, The Stay Strong Foundation, to speak to young people.

Video Oral History Interview with Terrie Williams, Section A2004\_165\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:47 ?

Terrie Williams met a young man through a mentoring program and adopted him at the age of sixteen. She continued her work with young people by starting a program called Project Believe, which teaches children leadership and life skills in an eight-week course at a school in Brooklyn, New York, New York. Williams published her book 'A Plentiful Harvest: Creating Balance and Harmony Through the Seven Living Virtues' in 2002. The book advocates for self-care while sharing lessons she learned in her quest to maintain balance and harmony. At the time of the interview, Williams was still heavily involved in her Stay Strong Foundation. The foundation aims to give people a chance to share their stories and find inspiration to use their gifts. Williams describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community and how she would like to be remembered. She remembers well-known people from her hometown of Mount Vernon, New York, reflects upon her legacy and concludes by narrating her photographs.