

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Dyana Williams

PERSON

Williams, Dyana, 1953-

Alternative Names: Dyana Williams;

Life Dates: November 9, 1953-

Place of Birth: New York, New York, USA

Residence: Philadelphia, PA

Work: Bala Cynwyd, PA

Occupations: Radio Personality; Talent Management
Chief Executive; Music Producer

Biographical Note

Dyana Williams, producer, artist development coach, former DJ, and founder of the International Association of African American Music (IAAAM), grew up in New York City. Williams's mother, Nancy Williams Newman, was Puerto Rican, and her father, George G. Williams, was from Virginia. Williams attended P.S. 78 in the Bronx until she was 10 years

old; she then moved to Puerto Rico where she attended Santa Rita Elementary School in Bayamon. Returning to the United States, Williams attended junior high school at Eleanor Roosevelt Intermediate School #143 in Harlem. An outstanding flute player at Washington Irving High School, Williams performed with Jimmy Heath and Hubert Laws. After graduating in 1971, Williams enrolled in the City College of New York where she became a DJ for the college radio station, WCCR.

By 1973, Williams had joined the staff of Howard University radio WHUR-FM. There, under the guidance of Bob “Nighthawk” Terry and John Paul Simpkins, Williams’s Ebony Moonbeams show attracted a strong following. In 1975, legendary DJ Frankie Crocker brought Williams to New York City’s WBLS radio; in 1976, she returned to Washington, D.C., where she became the first African American woman rock DJ at WRQX-FM. Williams worked as program director at WMMJ radio and as the host of television’s P.M. Magazine. After moving to Philadelphia in 1982, Williams established a show called Love on the Menu for WDAS radio. Williams also reported for Black Entertainment Television (BET), and worked as music consultant for The Soul of VH1. Closely associated with The Sound of Philadelphia (TSOP) and Philadelphia jazz and soul artists such as Patti LaBelle, Art Tatum, and Teddy Pendergrass, Williams produced the PBS special, The Philadelphia Music Makers in 1990. As a writer, Williams contributed to The Philadelphia Tribune, Billboard Magazine, and The Philadelphia New Observer.

In 1990, Williams and Sheila Eldridge launched the Association of African American Music (IAAAM) to promote and preserve black music. Williams co-wrote the House Concurrent Bill 509, which recognized African American accomplishments in music and helped establish Black Music Month. In 1997 Williams earned her B.A. degree in television, radio, and film

from Temple University. Williams formed Creative Consultants for Soul Solidarity in partnership with Eldridge. In 2006 Williams received the Achievement in Radio Award for Best Weekend Show in Philadelphia. Williams was formerly married to music producer and activist Kenny Gamble; their union produced three children.

Dyana Willams was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on February 8, 2005.

Related Entries

Washington Irving High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Eleanor Roosevelt Intermediate School #143
[STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

P.S. 78 [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Santa Rita Elementary School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]