

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Linda Torrence

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Torrence, Linda, 1944-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Linda Torrence,
Dates:	February 18, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:42:38).
Abstract:	Human resources chief executive and public relations chief executive Linda Torrence (1944 -) was the Director of Community Relations and Public Service for WAGA-TV in Atlanta, Georgia. She was the producer of, "The Georgia Gang," and directed the production of FOX5 Editorials. Torrence was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 18, 2006, in Stone Mountain, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_027
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Television producer and public relations director Linda Torrence was born on November 23, 1944, and grew up in College Station, Arkansas. She graduated from Wrightsville High School in Wrightsville, Arkansas in 1962. Her father, Samuel Hudson, was the city's first black police officer. Torrence attended Arkansas Baptist College and majored in business administration. She was the first black teller at the First National Bank in Little Rock from 1962 to 1967 and later managed the College Station Community Credit Union in 1972. Torrence

was politically active after high school and was the first African American female to represent Arkansas at the Democratic Convention in 1972 as an officer of the Young Democrats Club. She also hosted a television talk show on ABC-TV in Little Rock.

Torrence worked in adult education at the Urban League in Rochester, New York, and in fundraising at CBS, WHEC-TV as Director of Public Affairs. Torrence served as assistant to the director in the Donor Resources Department of the American Red Cross in Portland, Oregon, and co-founded two companies, the Walker (Business) Institute and Belcher-Torrence, a human resource company. Both companies offered business development and marketing strategies to businesses in the Portland community. Torrence was vice president of marketing and communications for the Private Industry Council (PIC) and director of human resources for Rogers Cable Television, a subsidiary of Canada's largest cable company. At Rogers Cable, Torrence was the host of the talk show, *Women in Focus*, which aired for three years.

Torrence joined the staff of WAGA-TV in 1990. In her position as director of community relations and public service, Torrence is the station's liaison to the Atlanta community. Torrence manages FOX5's sponsorships of non-profit organizations and serves as the point of contact for community related activities and issues. She is producer of *The Georgia Gang*, a weekly talk show of panelists who discuss Georgia politics, and directs the production of *FOX5 Editorials*.

Torrence serves on the board of the Boys and Girls Club of Metro Atlanta, DeKalb County Chamber of Commerce, Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University, Grady Hospital Foundation and Georgia Commission on Women. She is the recipient of numerous awards and citations and has been honored by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) for her role in the development of the America's Youth Passport. Torrence is a mother and grandmother. She resides in DeKalb County with her husband Joseph Phillips.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Linda Torrence was conducted by Evelyn Pounds on February 18, 2006, in Stone Mountain, Georgia, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Human resources chief executive and public relations chief executive Linda Torrence (1944 -) was the Director of Community Relations and Public Service for WAGA-TV in Atlanta, Georgia. She was the producer of, "The Georgia Gang," and directed the production of FOX5 Editorials.

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®.

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.

Controlled Access Terms

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

Persons:

Torrence, Linda, 1944-

Pounds, Evelyn (Interviewer)

Ball, Corey (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Torrence, Linda, 1944---Interviews

African American women public relations personnel--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews

African American television producers and directors--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Human Resources Chief Executive

Public Relations Chief Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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 Linda Torrence, February 18, 2006. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 2/5/2020 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Linda Torrence, Section
A2006_027_001_001, TRT: 0:29:17 2006/02/18

Linda Torrence was born on November 23, 1944 in Little Rock, Arkansas to Mary Jackson and Samuel Hudson. Torrence's father was among Little Rock's first black police officers, but resigned due to racial discrimination. Her mother was the only child of Mattie Rembert Williamson and Roscoe Jackson, who later divorced. Torrence's grandmother then married Minister Archie Williamson. Near Little Rock, Torrence grew up in poverty on her family's land in the rural town of College Station, Arkansas. Torrence later inherited the property, which was originally owned by her maternal great-grandmother, Adeline Rembert. Torrence's mother was a single parent, and raised Torrence and her nine siblings with government assistance. As a child, Torrence enjoyed playing hide and seek, hopscotch, and jump rope. She also walked to her grandmother's house to help with chores

like mopping and ironing. There, Torrence remembers discovering her religious faith at a young age.

African American women public relations personnel--
Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews.

African American television producers and directors--
Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Linda Torrence, Section
A2006_027_001_002, TRT: 0:28:08 2006/02/18

Linda Torrence's oldest brother and step-grandfather built a wooden house for her mother on her grandmother's property in College Station, Arkansas. Torrence attended College Station Elementary School, where her favorite teachers were David L. Lyons, Sr. and Lorraine D. Smith, who became the mayor of Wrightsville, Arkansas. While Torrence's elementary school was mostly black, her community was integrated. Its residents worked at the Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company and United States Time Corporation factories, or as domestic workers. When Torrence was growing up, College Station lacked public transit, so she often walked to the movie theater in Little Rock, Arkansas. Later, a local resident implemented a bus service, which Torrence rode to Wrightsville High School. Torrence describes her family's holiday celebrations, including her mother's Christmas and Thanksgiving meals; receiving a new dress and giving a speech in church for Easter; and the town's fireworks display on the Fourth of July.

Video Oral History Interview with Linda Torrence, Section
A2006_027_001_003, TRT: 0:30:04 2006/02/18

Linda Torrence recalls riding the bus to Wrightsville High School where her favorite subject was history. She played basketball, sang in the high school choir, and was a cheerleader. Torrence had aspirations of attending the University of California at Berkeley, but upon having her first child shortly after graduating in 1962, she decided to stay close to home while taking night courses at Arkansas Baptist College in Little Rock, Arkansas. During the day, Torrence worked at First National Bank, becoming the first African American teller. A bank customer, who was a graduate of Harvard Law School, convinced Torrence to

sue the bank for racial and gender discrimination when she was continuously passed over for promotions. The resulting class action lawsuit was settled out of court. Torrence also managed the College Station Community Credit Union on the weekends. Torrence moved her growing family to Flint, Michigan in 1972 where she managed the Flint Spokesman newspaper and worked at the local Urban League.

Video Oral History Interview with Linda Torrence, Section A2006_027_001_004, TRT: 0:28:21 2006/02/18

Linda Torrence's community involvement was inspired by activist Angela Davis and the Civil Rights Movement of Little Rock, Arkansas. There, Torrence joined a young Democrats club, and became the first African American woman to represent the State of Arkansas at the 1972 Democratic Convention. Later, while working for the Urban League in Flint, Michigan, she earned a business degree via a correspondent course. Torrence moved to Rochester, New York, and worked for the Urban League of Rochester as an adult education teacher. Then, she pursued her interest in television, and became the public affairs director for WHEC-TV in Rochester. In this role, she worked with non-profit organizations like Easterseals and the American Cancer Society to raise funds. She also wrote public service announcements, and promotions for the 'Tony Orlando and Dawn' television program. Torrence then moved to Portland, Oregon, where she joined King Broadcasting Company's KGW-TV station.

Video Oral History Interview with Linda Torrence, Section A2006_027_001_005, TRT: 0:29:05 2006/02/18

Linda Torrence served as the assistant to the senior account executive in sales at the KGW-TV station in Portland, Oregon. In this role, she handled paperwork for commercial advertisement traffic. Torrence then became the assistant director for donor resources at the American Red Cross, and managed the blood services for over thirty counties in Oregon and Washington. Outside of work, Torrence served on the Portland Custodians' Civil Service Board for the Portland Public Schools, and on a committee that evaluated the salaries of Multnomah County commissioners. In the 1980s, Torrence partnered with a

friend to found Belcher-Torrence, a human resources consulting firm. Then, after serving on the cable commission board, she obtained a position at Rogers Cable Systems, Portland's first cable franchise. Torrence also remembers adjusting to the cold weather of Flint, Michigan; Rochester, New York; and Portland, after leaving her hometown of College Station, Arkansas.

Video Oral History Interview with Linda Torrence, Section
A2006_027_001_006, TRT: 0:27:05 2006/02/18

Linda Torrence was overlooked for promotions at the American Red Cross, and left to start her own company, Belcher-Torrence, where she was president for three years. Then, she became Rogers Cable Systems' human resources director, and was responsible for hiring two hundred employees, one of whom was anchorman Dan Rather's daughter, Robin Rather. At the suggestion of a producer, Torrence began hosting her own television show, 'Women in Focus.' She also founded the Walker Institute, a professional black women's organization. Its inaugural lecture was given by Black Enterprise founder Earl G. Graves, Sr. Torrence worked at Rogers Cable Systems for six years, before becoming the vice president of marketing and communications for the Portland Private Industry Council, a job training facility. While hiring on one occasion, she found applicants hesitant to work for an African American woman. In 1990, Torrence became the community relations director of WAGA-TV in Atlanta, Georgia.

Video Oral History Interview with Linda Torrence, Section
A2006_027_001_007, TRT: 0:27:54 2006/02/18

Linda Torrence moved to Atlanta, Georgia in 1990 to be closer to her sisters and mother, Mary Jackson. There, Torrence became the community relations director for the WAGA-TV station. In this role, she handled the station's sponsorship of non-profit events with organizations like the American Heart Association and American Cancer Society. She also produced Georgia's oldest political talk show, 'The Georgia Gang.' In Atlanta, Torrence served on the board of directors of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta and the Grady Health Foundation. Torrence describes her three children, Tasha Torrence, Kirk

Torrence, and Elana Torrence; and her second husband, Joseph Phillips, whom she married in 1998. She also talks about her spirituality, and why she agreed to be interviewed by The HistoryMakers. Torrence concludes the interview by describing how she would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Linda Torrence, Section
A2006_027_001_008, TRT: 0:22:44 2006/02/18

Linda Torrence narrates her photographs.