

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lezli Baskerville

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Baskerville, Lezli, 1956-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Lezli Baskerville,
Dates:	November 6, 2006
Bulk Dates:	2006
Physical Description:	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:55:51).
Abstract:	Lawyer Lezli Baskerville (1956 -) was the first female president of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education. Baskerville was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 6, 2006, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2006_130
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Attorney Lezli Baskerville was born on January 20, 1956 in Montclair, New Jersey, as an identical twin sister of Dr. Renee E. Baskerville, to Marjorie (Henry) Baskerville, a teacher-social worker, and Charles W. Baskerville, a marketing executive. After graduating from Montclair High School, Baskerville received her bachelor's degree from Douglass Residential College in New Jersey, and later earned her J.D. degree from Howard University School of Law in 1979.

For two decades, Baskerville served as outside counsel to the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO). She also worked during this time as Executive Director of the National Black Leadership Roundtable (NCLR). In addition, she served as National Legislative Counsel for the NAACP, as a member of the national appellate litigation team of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, and as an administrative appeals judge in the District of Columbia.

Between 1989 and 1999, Baskerville managed a successful private legal and legislative services collective called, The Baskerville Group, providing legal and government relations representation, advocacy and diversity services to higher education institutions, associations, municipalities, elected officials, non-profit groups, small businesses and corporations.

As Vice-President for the College Board (between 1999 and 2003), Baskerville was Chief Executive Officer of the Board's Washington office. In 2004, after serving for two months as the Interim President of NAFEO, its Board named Baskerville its first female president. She serves as the liaison between Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and executive, legislative and judicial branches of the federal and state governments and corporations, foundations, and non-governmental organizations, to champion the interests of and build the capacity of the HBCU community.

Baskerville lives in Washington, D.C.

Baskerville was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on November 6, 2006.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Lezli Baskerville was conducted by Robert Hayden on November 6, 2006, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Lawyer Lezli Baskerville (1956 -) was the first female president of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education.

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:

Baskerville, Lezli, 1956-

Hayden, Robert (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Baskerville, Lezli, 1956- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Education Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Lezli Baskerville, November 6, 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 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).

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 Lezli Baskerville, Section A2006_130_001_001, TRT: 0:29:30 ?

Lezli Baskerville was born January 20, 1956 in Montclair, New Jersey to Charles Baskerville, Jr. and Marjorie Henry Baskerville. Her paternal grandfather, Charles Baskerville, Sr., was the first African American superintendent in Montclair, where her paternal grandmother, Ruth Baskerville, was a registered nurse. In Norfolk, Virginia, her maternal grandfather, Clifford Henry, worked at the Naval Station Norfolk, while his wife, Sally Cunningham

Henry, was a homemaker. Together, they owned Sally's Sandwich Shop. Baskerville's parents met at Howard University, after which her father became the first African American marketing consultant for Northwest Airlines, and wrote music. Her mother earned a master's degree in social work at Rutgers University, and became the principal of New Jersey's Whitney E. Houston Academy of Creative and Performing Arts. Baskerville and grew up in Montclair, and spent the summers with her maternal family in Norfolk, where she experienced discrimination in segregated shops.

Video Oral History Interview with Lezli Baskerville, Section A2006_130_001_002, TRT: 0:30:20 ?

Lezli Baskerville's maternal grandfather, Clifford Henry, set up identical Christmas trees each year for her and her twin sister, Renee Baskerville. Despite this, Baskerville's father encouraged his daughters to pursue their individual passions. Baskerville and her sister attended the public Nishuane Elementary School during the era of school desegregation in Montclair, New Jersey. Her parents were strong advocates of the busing effort, which brought in students from other areas to integrate the schools. After the public school system was integrated, Baskerville made white friends, but some of their parents did not allow her into their homes. While a student at Hillside Middle School, Baskerville became involved with the Committee for Unified Newark, headed by Amiri Baraka, and changed her name and attire to celebrate her African heritage. Her family embraced the lessons of the Nguzo Saba as taught by Maulana Karenga, and became one of the first families in the area to celebrate Kwanzaa.

Video Oral History Interview with Lezli Baskerville, Section A2006_130_001_003, TRT: 0:29:51 ?

Lezli Baskerville aspired to become a constitutional lawyer from an early age. When Montclair High School's only African American guidance counsellor, Mr. Lee, was nearly dismissed, the community protested; and, with the support of Reverend William H. Gray, III, compelled the school to hire more black counsellors. Baskerville graduated early, and attended Douglass College in New Brunswick, New Jersey, where she became president of the black student union. She organized a sit-in during a basketball game, which led to the appointment of Jewel Plumber Cobb as the first African American female dean. Baskerville went on to Howard University School of Law, where Herbert O. Reid, Sr. introduced her to the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education's affirmative action casework. After graduation, Baskerville held a clerkship at the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, and was subsequently hired by the Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights under Law, where she aided attorney John Conyers, Jr.

Video Oral History Interview with Lezli Baskerville, Section A2006_130_001_004, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Lezli Baskerville developed a thyroid disorder during her first year at Howard University School of Law, and doctors failed to diagnose her until she became blind and paralyzed. Her professors, including her mentor, Herbert O. Reid, Sr., tutored her privately in the hospital until her recovery six months later. Reid also introduced Baskerville to the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, where she first worked as outside counsel, and later collaborated on a landmark affirmative action case, Grutter v. Bollinger, in her capacity as vice president of the College Board. Upon graduation from law school, Baskerville worked at the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights under Law, while also serving as volunteer counsel to the NAACP, where she later worked as national legislative counsel. Together with the NAACP's Reverend Benjamin Hooks and Althea T.L. Simmons, Baskerville ensured that the Fair Housing Act, Voting Rights Act and Civil Rights Act were upheld.

Video Oral History Interview with Lezli Baskerville, Section A2006_130_001_005, TRT: 0:28:50 ?

Lezli Baskerville founded the Baskerville Group, a legal and legislative services collective, in 1989. The organization represented educational institutions and municipalities before state legislatures. At that time, Baskerville also joined Reverend Walter Fauntroy and the Congressional Black Congress in founding the National Black Leadership Roundtable, and served as its first executive director. There, she implemented the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday bill with John Conyers, Jr., and an economic empowerment plan devised by Parren J. Mitchell, III. In 1999, the Baskerville Group dissolved, and Baskerville became vice president of the College Board. In 2004, she accepted a position as the first female president of the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO). Soon after, Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast. Baskerville describes NAFEO's role in aiding historically black colleges affected by the disaster, like Southern University at New Orleans.

Video Oral History Interview with Lezli Baskerville, Section A2006_130_001_006, TRT: 0:28:10 ?

Lezli Baskerville describes misconceptions about affirmative action. She argues that affirmative action is still important and relevant today, as America is not at the point yet where race no longer matters. Baskerville remembers her life partner, Dr. Clinton Bristow, Jr., with whom she shared her passion for educational reform. While at a meeting for the National Black Leadership Roundtable, Dorothy Height advised Baskerville to combine her passion with her livelihood, and to always prepare financially for tomorrow, which she took to heart. Baskerville's advice to young African Americans considering a career in the legal profession is to obtain quality education and to live altruistically. Baskerville outlines her future aspirations and goals for the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, and describes how she would like to be remembered. Baskerville then narrates her photographs.