Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Priscilla Clarke

Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616
info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com

Creator: Priscilla Clarke

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Priscilla Clarke,

Dates: November 10, 2006

Bulk Dates: 2006

Physical Description: 4 Betacam SP videocassettes (1:54:20).

Abstract: Public relations chief executive Priscilla Clarke (1960 - ) is the President and CEO of Clarke & Associates, LLC, a public relations, event planning, entertainment and media relations company whose clients have included Beyonce, Shaquille O'Neal, the National Council of Negro Women and the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. Clarke was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 10, 2006, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

Identification: A2006_138

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Public relations chief executive Priscilla Clarke was born on August 3, 1960 in Swindon, England to Dorothy Sharples, a white Englishwoman, and Gilbert Clarke, an African American stationed in the United Kingdom. The family moved to Springfield, Massachusetts when she was an infant. Her parents divorced when she was six, and Clarke split her time between their homes in Springfield, Massachusetts and Windsor, Connecticut, graduating from Windsor High School in 1978. Clarke attended Western New England College, where she majored in political science, but left school to give birth to her first daughter.

Clarke moved to Maryland, where she owned and managed a health food store in Gaithersburg, Maryland from 1988 to 2001. After selling the store, she embarked on a career in television production, taking classes at Fairfax Public Access (FPA) in Fairfax, Virginia to become a certified television producer. In the course of job hunting, she met the producers of Def Comedy Jam and began handling the merchandising for the comedy shows. She discovered that she enjoyed doing publicity and enrolled at Columbia Union College in Takoma Park, Maryland to study communications and business.

In 2003, she launched Clarke & Associates in Washington, D.C., where she is currently the president and CEO. Specializing in public relations, event planning, entertainment and media relations, Clarke’s clients have included Black Entertainment Television (BET), the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, the National Medical Association, the National Council of Negro Women, the Urban League, Boys and Girls Club of America, and Tuskegee Institute. Shaquille O’Neal, Beyonce Knowles, the late Johnny Cochran and Robert Townsend are among her celebrity clients. In 2003, Clarke was named one of the “Fifty Influential Minorities in Business” by the Minority Business & Professionals Network, Inc. In 2006, Clarke received the Black Press All-Star Award for...
Publicist of the Year.

Clarke is the mother of three children, Huda, Ilyas, and Qasin Mumin.

Clarke was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on November 10, 2006.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Priscilla Clarke was conducted by Robert Hayden on November 10, 2006, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 4 Betacam SP videocassettes. Public relations chief executive Priscilla Clarke (1960 - ) is the President and CEO of Clarke & Associates, LLC, a public relations, event planning, entertainment and media relations company whose clients have included Beyonce, Shaquille O'Neal, the National Council of Negro Women and the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation.

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:

Clarke, Priscilla

Hayden, Robert (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Clarke, Priscilla--Interviews.

African American businesswomen--Interviews.

African American public relations consultants--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Clarke & Associates, LLC

HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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


Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 8/19/2011 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
Priscilla Clarke describes her family background. Her mother, Dorothy Sharples, was born and raised in England. Born in Poolesville, Maryland in 1936, her father Gilbert Clarke was an independent home improvement salesman. Dorothy met and married Clarke's father, in 1958 when he was stationed in England with the Air Force. Clarke was born in 1960 in Swindon, England, and the family moved to Springfield, Massachusetts when she was about one year old. Clarke's parents divorced when she was six years old, but she continued living with her mother in Springfield. When she was eleven, their house burned down, and they moved from their middle-class neighborhood to a ghetto and a new school, where she was attacked twice. When she was twelve, a friend convinced her to take a karate class, which she loved. She began competing, becoming a Canadian and East Coast champion by the time she was eighteen.

Interacial marriage.
Divorce.
African American families--Massachusetts--Springfield.
Single parents.
Karate.
Housing--Fires and fire prevention.

Priscilla Clarke describes her teenage years in Springfield, Massachusetts. After her house fire, she attended Forest Park Junior High School, which was rife with racial tension and disagreements about school busing. Later, she alternated living with her mother and father, attending Windsor High School in her father's predominantly white, upscale neighborhood. On the honor roll, Clarke was a member of the basketball team and editor of the school newspaper before graduating in 1978. Clarke then enrolled at Western New England College in Springfield, majoring in political science. Beginning at the age of twelve, Clarke worked throughout her teenage years, holding jobs at the Barnum & Bailey Circus, Burger King and in a nursing home. Clarke talks at length about injustice and the racism she experienced as a biracial woman, including an incident in college when the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan attempted to recruit members in her homeroom.

African American families--Massachusetts--Springfield.
African Americans--Education (Secondary)--Massachusetts--Springfield.
Busing for school integration.
African American college students--Massachusetts--Springfield.
Western New England College.
Teenagers--Work.
Ku Klux Klan (1915-).

Priscilla Clarke discusses dropping out of college because she was pregnant with her first daughter, Huda, eventually moving from Massachusetts to Maryland. She worked from home, designing hats and clothing, before buying a
failing health food store, Eat to Live Health Food Store, and turning it into a successful business. Clarke then describes the deep depression that she felt when, a few years later, her mother was killed in a fire, her marriage failed and the store's expansion was impeded by neighborhood protests. She decided to pursue a career in television production, becoming a certified television producer. Unable to find a job, she began handling merchandising and publicity for Def Comedy Jam and other clubs. Discovering a love for public relations, she took classes in communications and business at Columbia Union College in Takoma Park, Maryland. After learning the industry, a successful local publicity campaign for attorney Johnnie Cochran helped to launch her career. African American businesswomen.

African American mothers.

Parents--Death.

Divorce.

Television production and direction.

African American public relations consultants.


Video Oral History Interview with Priscilla Clarke, Section A2006_138_001_004, TRT: 0:28:30 2006/11/10

Priscilla Clarke discusses her business, Clarke & Associates, which is a public relations firm. Working with more than 300 media outlets worldwide, Clarke & Associates organizes publicity campaigns, crisis management, galas, album release parties, golf tournaments. The agency is cause driven, serving nonprofits as well as corporate, political, and entertainment clients. She discusses some of her projects, including working with Oprah Winfrey and the National Council of Negro Women for a fundraiser which raised $6.5 million to celebrate Dr. Dorothy Height’s ninetieth birthday. Clarke reflects on her life, wishing that she had spent more time with her children. Clarke shares her hopes and concerns for African American community. She tries to mentor children as much as possible because she feels that African American youth have not received enough national and collective attention. She hopes that she has touched people’s lives and made a change in the world.

African American businesswomen.

African American public relations consultants.

Winfrey, Oprah.

National Council of Negro Women.

Height, Dorothy I. (Dorothy Irene), 1912-2010.