

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Jamie Foster Brown

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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>	Brown, Jamie Foster
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Jamie Foster Brown,
<b>Dates:</b>	April 11, 2019 and February 5, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007 and 2019
<b>Physical Description:</b>	13 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files (6:03:48).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Magazine publisher Jamie Foster Brown (1946 - ) served as assistant producer of BET's Video Soul and Video LP programs and later founded Sister 2 Sister magazine and created the syndicated radio show, The Sister 2 Sister Celebrity Update. Brown was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 11, 2019 and February 5, 2007, in Bowie, Maryland and New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_046
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Magazine publisher Jamie Foster Brown was born on June 25, 1946 in Chicago, Illinois to Mamie Lee and Peter James Foster. She graduated from Calumet High School in Chicago, Illinois and attended Roosevelt University. She later received her B.A. degree from the University of Stockholm in Stockholm, Sweden.

After graduating from high school, Brown worked for the Equitable Life Insurance Society and later worked at the Teletype Corporation. She was then

hired as William A. Nail's assistant at Zenith Electronics and later worked as a secretary at Foote, Cone & Belding in Chicago, Illinois. In 1972, Brown and her husband, Dr. Lorenzo Brown, moved to Sweden. Together, they managed a cleaning business while finishing their respective degrees. In 1978, they returned to the United States and moved to Washington, D.C. There, Brown founded the Washington Theater Group, an organization that marketed group ticket sales for theatrical performances in 1979. In 1981, Brown was hired as Robert L. Johnson's advertising secretary at Black Entertainment Television (BET). From 1981 to 1985, Brown worked as an assistant producer of BET's *Video Soul* and *Video LP* programs. She left BET in 1985, and was hired at *Impact* magazine. In 1988, Brown founded *Sister 2 Sister* magazine and later created a syndicated radio show, *The Sister 2 Sister Celebrity Update*. Brown also appeared as a regular guest on the *Joan Rivers Show* and on the *Tom Joyner Morning Show*. In 1998, Brown published *Betty Shabazz: A Sisterfriends' Tribute in Words and Pictures*. Brown also appeared on an episode of *E! True Hollywood Story* in 2009, and in the 2012 film *Think Like a Man*. Later, in 2015, Brown appeared in the television series *Unsung*.

In 1998, Brown received the Midwest Radio and Music Association's Lifetime Achievement Award. She was inducted into the National Association of Black Female Executives in Music and Entertainment, Shero Hall of Fame in 2002. She then received the Golden Scissors Lifetime Achievement Award and the Association for Women in Communications, Matrix Award for Professional Achievement. In 2008, she was awarded an honorary doctorate degree from Bennett College. The following year, Brown received the Freedom Sisters Award from the Ford Motor Company.

Jamie Foster Brown was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on February 5, 2007 and April 11, 2019.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Jamie Foster Brown was conducted by Harriette Cole and Janet Sims-Wood on April 11, 2019 and February 5, 2007, in Bowie, Maryland and New York, New York, and was recorded on 13 Betacame SP videocassettes uncompressed MOV digital video files. Magazine publisher Jamie Foster Brown (1946 - ) served as assistant producer of BET's *Video Soul* and *Video LP* programs and later founded *Sister 2 Sister* magazine and created the syndicated radio show, *The Sister 2 Sister Celebrity Update*.

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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:

Brown, Jamie Foster

Cole, Harriette (Interviewer)

Sims-Wood, Janet (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

(Videographer)

## **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews  
Brown, Jamie Foster--Interviews

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African American women executives--Interviews

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Publishers and publishing--Interviews

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Women publishers--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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## **Occupations:**

Magazine Publisher

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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 Jamie Foster Brown, April 11, 2019 and February 5, 2007. 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).

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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 Jamie Foster Brown, Section A2007\_046\_001\_001, TRT: 1:29:08 2007/02/05

Jamie Foster Brown was born on June 25, 1946 in Chicago, Illinois to Mamie Lee Harris Foster and Peter Foster. Foster Brown's mother was born in Silver City, Mississippi, and moved to Chicago as a teenager. Her father was born in Missouri, and migrated to Chicago after his family was threatened by a white employer. In Chicago, her father worked at a slaughterhouse, while her mother was employed by a soldering company, and later owned a school supply store. Foster Brown grew up in Chicago's Englewood community with three siblings. One of her sisters, Stella Foster, later became a columnist for the Chicago Sun-Times. When Foster Brown was young,

her parents toured as evangelist singers, and left her and her siblings in the care of their grandmother, Estella Harris, and maternal uncle, Flemma Harris, Jr., who lived in neighboring apartments. Foster Brown attended Chicago's Joshua D. Kershaw Elementary School, Parker High School and Calumet High School, and learned African dance at the Southtown YMCA.

African American women executives--Interviews.

Publishers and publishing--Interviews.

Women publishers--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Jamie Foster Brown, Section A2007\_046\_001\_002, TRT: 2:28:28 2007/02/05

Jamie Foster Brown grew up with three siblings in the close knit community of Englewood in Chicago, Illinois. When a fire in the neighborhood left four children homeless, her parents offered them shelter until they found permanent housing. At the majority white Calumet High School in Chicago, Foster Brown excelled academically, and experienced discrimination from her white peers. Upon graduating, the vice principal helped her secure a secretarial position at the Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States, and she later worked at Teletype Corporation and Zenith Radio Corporation. Foster Brown also took courses at Chicago's Roosevelt University, where she met her husband, Lorenzo Brown, a professor at Miles College in Fairfield, Alabama. While visiting him in Fairfield, Foster Brown was mistaken for Black Panther Party member Kathleen Cleaver, who was in hiding with Brown's fellow SNCC member Willie Ricks. This prompted a federal investigation of Foster Brown and her family.

Video Oral History Interview with Jamie Foster Brown, Section A2007\_046\_001\_003, TRT: 3:29:00 2007/02/05

Jamie Foster Brown and Lorenzo Brown were married by Miles College President Lucius Holsey Pitts, Sr. in Fairfield, Alabama. The couple lived briefly with Brown's family in Marion, Alabama, and then moved to Chicago, Illinois, where Foster Brown worked as a secretary at Foote, Cone and Belding advertising agency. She was offered a position with Chicago Sun-Times columnist Irv

Kupciner, but instead recommended her sister, Stella Foster, who worked as his assistant for many years. Then, Foster Brown moved to Sweden, where her husband studied the Swedish economy for his Ph.D. degree, and she learned Swedish and Japanese. During this time, they had two sons, Randall Brown and Russell Brown. Foster Brown and her family spent nine years in Sweden, where they played intramural basketball and made many close friends. Upon relocating to Washington, D.C., Foster Brown served as the assistant to BET founder Robert L. Johnson, while her husband taught economics at Howard University with Professor Cleveland Chandler.

Video Oral History Interview with Jamie Foster Brown, Section A2007\_046\_001\_004, TRT: 4:29:13 2007/02/05

Jamie Foster Brown was hired by Black Entertainment Television (BET) founder Robert L. Johnson after impressing him with her secretarial skills. He tasked her with writing the pilot for BET's 'Video Soul,' a program hosted by Donnie Simpson and Sheila Banks. Foster Brown later became the assistant producer of the 'Video Soul' and 'Video LP' programs. In this role, she conducted preliminary interviews of guests, which built her reputation in the music industry and developed her interview skills. Foster Brown left BET after five years, and became a columnist at Impact magazine. After unsuccessfully pitching her articles to other publications, Foster Brown decided to found her own magazine with the help of Ebony magazine columnist Laura B. Randolph. Foster Brown published the first Sister 2 Sister magazine in 1988. Her initial advertisers were Sylvia Rhone of Elektra Records, and Art Kass of Buddah Records. Sister 2 Sister went on to publish interviews of musical artists like T.I. and Bobby Brown.

Video Oral History Interview with Jamie Foster Brown, Section A2007\_046\_001\_005, TRT: 5:29:02 2007/02/05

Jamie Foster Brown often published interviews verbatim in Sister 2 Sister magazine. To promote the publication, interviews with popular artists were featured in Downtown Locker Room clothing stores. Foster Brown was sometimes criticized for her editorials about hip-hop music, but describes her belief that rappers have a

responsibility to be good role models for children. For her part, Foster Brown founded the Intergenerational Celebration to provide opportunities for prominent African Americans to mentor the community's youth. Foster Brown was honored with the Matrix Award for Professional Achievement, and was placed in the Congressional Record by Congresswomen Carol Moseley Braun and Maxine Waters. In 1998, Foster Brown published the book 'Betty Shabazz: A Sisterfriends' Tribute in Words and Pictures,' based on her interviews of Shabazz's family and friends. Brown also talks about the history of her home in Bowie, Maryland, as well as its colorful aesthetic and her collection of celebrity paraphernalia.

Video Oral History Interview with Jamie Foster Brown, Section A2007\_046\_001\_006, TRT: 6:29:33 2007/02/05

Jamie Foster Brown became involved in Washington, D.C.'s theater community upon her return from Sweden. She helped produce Ntozake Shange's 'For Colored Girls' with Irene Norris from the National Organization of Women, and went on to found the Washington Theater Group, a ticket booking agency for churches and other organizations. Foster Brown also recalls how her oldest son, Randall Brown, wanted to leave Brown University, but was convinced to stay at a party hosted by Joan Rivers. In 1992, Randall Brown was shot by a friend's ex-boyfriend, and survived four gunshot wounds, including one in his heart. Foster Brown's family received support from African American celebrities like television host Oprah Winfrey and basketball player Michael Jordan. The incident garnered national attention, and her family was interviewed by Jackie Trescott for The Washington Post. Foster Brown also describes the importance of preserving African American history, and her plans to travel the world.

Video Oral History Interview with Jamie Foster Brown, Section A2007\_046\_001\_007, TRT: 7:24:39 2007/02/05

Jamie Foster Brown shares her advice to aspiring journalists and publishers. She reflects upon her life and legacy, as well as her career and the growth of her magazine, Sister 2 Sister. Foster Brown talks about her



hopes and concerns for the African American community, and the importance of African American history. She also describes her marriage; her plans for the future; and how she would like to be remembered. Foster Brown concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Jamie Foster Brown, Section A2007\_046\_002\_008, TRT: 8:29:25 2019/04/11

Video Oral History Interview with Jamie Foster Brown, Section A2007\_046\_002\_009, TRT: 9:28:40 2019/04/11

Video Oral History Interview with Jamie Foster Brown, Section A2007\_046\_002\_010, TRT: 10:28:33 2019/04/11

Video Oral History Interview with Jamie Foster Brown, Section A2007\_046\_002\_011, TRT: 11:29:05 2019/04/11

Video Oral History Interview with Jamie Foster Brown, Section A2007\_046\_002\_012, TRT: 12:29:20 2019/04/11

Video Oral History Interview with Jamie Foster Brown, Section A2007\_046\_002\_013, TRT: 13:19:42 2019/04/11