# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Michele Norris

## Overview of the Collection

| Repository: | The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com |
| Creator: | Norris, Michele |
| Title: | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Michele Norris, |
| Dates: | May 2, 2008 |
| Bulk Dates: | 2008 |
| Physical Description: | 2 Betacam SP videocassettes (0:58:20). |
| Abstract: | Radio host and television news correspondent Michele Norris (1961 - ) is the host of National Public Radio's (NPR) "All Things Considered". She is the first African American female host on NPR. As a correspondent for ABC News, Norris won an Emmy Award and a Peabody Award for her coverage of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Norris was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 2, 2008, in Washington, District of Columbia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| Identification: | A2008_078 |
| Language: | The interview and records are in English. |

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Journalist and National Public Radio (NPR) host Michele Norris-Johnson (known as Michele Norris on NPR) was born on September 7, 1961, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to Belvin and Elizabeth Norris. As a youth, Norris was encouraged by her parents to read the newspaper and watch the evening news. In 1979, she graduated from Minneapolis’ Washburn High School where she participated in the InRoads Program.

Norris went on to enroll at the University of Wisconsin to pursue a career as an electrical engineer. After completing three and a half years, Norris was encouraged by a dean to take political science courses. In 1982, she transferred to the University of Minnesota and majored in journalism and mass communications. There, she also wrote stories for the "Minnesota Daily" and was later hired by WCCO-TV as a beat reporter. Throughout the 1980s, Norris worked as a reporter for the Washington Post, the Chicago Tribune, and the L.A. Times. During her stint with the Washington Post, Norris wrote a series about a six-year-old who was living in a crack house. The story was reprinted in a book entitled "OurSelves Among Others". Then, in 1993, she was hired as a news correspondent for ABC News and as a contributing correspondent for the “Closer Look” segments on World News Tonight with Peter Jennings. While serving as a reporter for ABC, Norris received an Emmy Award and a Peabody Award for her contribution to the coverage of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. After working for ABC, in 2002, Norris was selected out of 100 candidates to be the host of "All Things Considered", the nation’s longest-running radio program on NPR. In this capacity, Norris became the first African American female host for NPR. In 1990, Norris won the Livingston Award for young journalists. She is a four-time entrant for the Pulitzer Prize. In 2006, she received the University of Minnesota’s Outstanding Achievement Award, and the National Association of Black Journalists’ Salute to Excellence Award. In 2007, she received Ebony magazine’s eighth annual Outstanding Women in Marketing & Communications Award. Norris lives in Washington, D.C. with her husband Broderick Johnson and their three children.
Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Michele Norris was conducted by Larry Crowe on May 2, 2008, in Washington, District of Columbia, and was recorded on 2 Betacam SP videocassettes. Radio host and television news correspondent Michele Norris (1961 - ) is the host of National Public Radio's (NPR) "All Things Considered". She is the first African American female host on NPR. As a correspondent for ABC News, Norris won an Emmy Award and a Peabody Award for her coverage of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

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:

Norris, Michele
Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)
Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Norris, Michele--Interviews
African American women journalists--Interviews
Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers ® Video Oral History with Michele Norris

**African American television journalists--Interviews**

**Radio journalists--Interviews**

**Organizations:**

- HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)
- The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection
- National Public Radio (U.S.)
- ABC News

**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**


**Processing Information**

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 6/22/2012 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**
Michele Norris begins the interview by discussing the unique pronunciation of her name. Norris was born on September 7, 1961 in Minneapolis, Minnesota at Mount Sinai Hospital. She has worked as a journalist, television news correspondent and radio host. She was the first African American female host of National Public Radio’s (NPR) "All Things Considered". Her mother, Elizabeth “Betty” (née Brown) Norris was born on March 2, 1931. Norris’ mother went to South High School and worked for a time in the garment industry before going to work for the post office. Norris’ father, Belvin Norris, Jr., was born on July 11, 1925 in Birmingham, Alabama. He also worked for the postal service. Norris speaks about how she cherished her childhood on the South Side of Minneapolis. She remembers growing up in an integrated, traditional Mid-western neighborhood with stucco homes. When Norris’ family first moved into the neighborhood, it was further south than many black families had lived at the time. Norris always viewed the place where she grew up as a racially tolerant, peaceful and integrated neighborhood. However, she later found out that for sale signs began to go up when her family moved into the neighborhood. During her interview, Norris also discusses a family secret involving her maternal grandmother's work as a traveling “Aunt Jemima”. Norris’ mother hated this story because of the painful stigma of slavery African Americans associated with the pancake trademark. While Norris acknowledges the negative connotations linked to her grandmother’s former work, she believes it ultimately set her grandmother on the path to becoming the community leader that she became in Minnesota.

African American women journalists--Interviews.
African American television journalists--Interviews.
Radio journalists--Interviews.

Michele Norris talks about her father. She recalls how he enjoyed winters in Minnesota. When the first snow fall came, he would be right outside shoveling the snow. He refused to get a snow blower; he preferred to shovel the snow by hand. Norris attended Eugene Field Elementary School for first grade. In second grade she transferred to St. Joan of Arc Elementary School, a Catholic school on the South Side of Minneapolis. Her favorite subject in elementary school was reading—she loved it. As she got older, Norris devoured the weekly magazines that came to her house, like "Time" and "National Geographic". Reading filled her imagination about the wonderful world outside the boundaries of Minnesota. At Washburn Senior High School, Norris gravitated towards the sciences—namely physics and biology. She remembers Roland DeLapp, who was principal of the high school. He was very encouraging of Norris and used to tell her that she had a very special future ahead of her. After graduating from high school in 1979, Norris attended the University of Wisconsin and studied electrical engineering.