

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Rochelle Stevens

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Stevens, Rochelle, 1966-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Rochelle Stevens,
Dates:	July 29, 2010
Bulk Dates:	2010
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:05:57).
Abstract:	Track and field athlete Rochelle Stevens (1966 -) won the silver medal at the 1992 Olympic Games and the gold medal at the 1996 Olympic Games in the 4x400 women's relay, and now runs her own health center. Stevens was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 29, 2010, in Memphis, Tennessee. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2010_091
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Track and field athlete and fitness center entrepreneur Rochelle Stevens was born on September 8, 1966, in Memphis, Tennessee to the Reverend Beatrice Holloway-Davis. She attended Melrose High School and took to running competitively at an early age. By the time Stevens graduated high school, she was a TSSAA high school State Champion, a National High School All-American, a city champion, and an AAU Junior Olympics National Champion. She attended Morgan State University on a full track scholarship and received her B.S. degree in telecommunications and sales from that institution. She went on to receive an

M.S. degree in public relations from Columbus University and then began her professional track career in earnest, coached by her mother who had also been a college track star.

After her first attempt in 1988, Stevens qualified for the Olympics and went to the Olympic Games in 1992, in Barcelona, Spain. She won the silver medal for her performance in the women's 4x400 meter relay race and came in sixth in the world in the solo 400 meter race. At the next Olympic Games, held in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1996, Stevens competed in the women's 4x400 meter race again and this time took home the gold medal.

Upon returning home to Memphis, Stevens founded the Rochelle Stevens Health and Wellness Spa, where she developed exercise, diet, and therapeutic programs. She also started and continues to sponsor the Rochelle Stevens International Track Invitational Meet, which is designed to expose high school students to college recruiters and formal track competitions. The event is certified to qualify runners for the junior Olympics, senior Olympics, and the Olympic trials.

Stevens retired from professional track competitions in 2000, and began substitute teaching and then serving as a behavioral specialist at Cherokee Elementary School, which she once attended. She has worked as a spokeswoman and motivational speaker for many Fortune 500 companies, including Nike, Maybelline, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and the Bank of America. Stevens is a member of the Better Business Bureau, the Black Business Association, the National Speaker Bureau, and the Word of Life Ministry.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Rochelle Stevens was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 29, 2010, in Memphis, Tennessee, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Track and field athlete Rochelle Stevens (1966 -) won the silver medal at the 1992 Olympic Games and the gold medal at the 1996 Olympic Games in the 4x400 women's relay, and now runs her own health center.

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:

Stevens, Rochelle, 1966-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Stevens, Rochelle, 1966---Interviews

Organizations:

Occupations:

Track and Field Athlete

HistoryMakers® Category:

SportsMakers

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 Rochelle Stevens, July 29, 2010. 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 Rochelle Stevens, Section
A2010_091_001_001, TRT: 0:30:53 2010/07/29

Rochelle Stevens was born on September 8, 1966 in Memphis, Tennessee to Beatrice Stevens Holloway and John Holloway. Her maternal great-grandmother, Bell Stevens, was born sometime after emancipation. Stevens' mother, a special education teacher and a coach who trained world-class athletes, had been the Tennessee state 4x100 meter relay champion at Barrett Chapel High School in Arlington. Stevens' father attended Shelby County Training School, Barrett's rival school, where he met Stevens' mother before fighting in the Vietnam War. He was a mechanic for Memphis Light, Gas and Water and the lead singer for Southern Sons of Memphis. Stevens grew up in the Orange Mound area of Memphis, which had a high rate of African American home ownership. At the age of ten, her father left. Stevens recalls attending Living Word Ministries with her three sisters and her voracious appetite as a child. At Melrose High School, her classmates included future professional athletes Sheila Echols and Barry Wilburn.

Video Oral History Interview with Rochelle Stevens, Section
A2010_091_001_002, TRT: 0:28:44 2010/07/29

Rochelle Stevens attended Cherokee Elementary School in Memphis, Tennessee after two years at Sharpe Elementary School. In 1977, she was bussed to integrate Richland Junior High School, where racial tensions grew as the 'Roots' miniseries aired. Inspired by Wilma Rudolph and her mother, Beatrice Stevens Holloway, a state championship runner, Stevens aspired to be an Olympic runner at a young age. She prioritized track over

basketball because of the limited opportunities for professional female basketball players. At twelve years old, Stevens competed in the AAU Junior Olympics in Dayton, Ohio, and finished fourth in the nation. She specialized in the 800 meter run, but when her coach put her in the 200 meter dash as a joke during her senior year, Stevens won the state competition. After a negative encounter with Wilma Rudolph's coach, Ed Temple, Stevens decided against attending Tennessee State University in Nashville. She beat Temple's best recruits in a meet during her junior year of high school.

Video Oral History Interview with Rochelle Stevens, Section
A2010_091_001_003, TRT: 0:33:12 2010/07/29

Rochelle Stevens ran track, sang choir, and focused on her studies at Melrose High School in Memphis, Tennessee. When she graduated in 1984, she had been offered twenty athletic collegiate scholarships. She decided to attend Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland because Coach Leonard Braxton assured her that she would finish a degree and not only focus on sports. As a telecommunications major, she learned the value of writing, which she stresses now in her work as a behavioral specialist. She competed with Morgan State in the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference and the Penn Relays, where she saw Bill Cosby and Valerie Brisco-Hooks her freshman year. At her first international competition, Stevens and the United States team won a gold medal at the World University Games in Zagreb, Yugoslavia. Stevens competed in East Berlin in 1989, where she was cautioned not to wear her U.S. apparel.

Video Oral History Interview with Rochelle Stevens, Section
A2010_091_001_004, TRT: 0:29:14 2010/07/29

Rochelle Stevens set several track records while attending Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland. Her commitment to track curtailed her social life and plans to join a sorority. She graduated in 1988 and that summer, she tried out for the U.S. Olympic track team in Indianapolis, Indiana. Narrowly eliminated on a technicality, Stevens returned to Tennessee disappointed and jobless. After Kermit Foster introduced her to track-club running and became her agent, Stevens began earning

money for track appearances. She recommitted to training, and by 1989, was ranked number one in the U.S. in the 400 meter dash and fourth in the world. With her mother, Beatrice Stevens Holloway, as her coach, she ran against and beat track stars like Florence “Flo Jo” Griffith Joyner. Stevens tried out for the U.S. Olympic track team a second time in 1992 in New Orleans, Louisiana. Stevens also speaks about how her diet as an athlete changed over the years, her strategy and her new coach, her mother.

Video Oral History Interview with Rochelle Stevens, Section
A2010_091_001_005, TRT: 0:30:55 2010/07/29

Rochelle Stevens trained every day with her mother, Beatrice Stevens Holloway, as her coach. She attended her second Olympic trials in 1992 in New Orleans, Louisiana. Her godmother, 1956 Olympic Bronze medalist Margaret Matthew Wilburn, joined Stevens and her mother at the trials, where Stevens placed first. The 1992 Olympic Games were held in Barcelona, Spain, and Stevens shared a suite with seven other athletes. Stevens had to undergo random drug testing, as steroid use was just starting to be exposed, although the major scandals did not come until 1998. She competed against talented runners like Maria Perrette from France and lost a close race to Olga Bryzgina in the 4x400. Stevens was the only American runner to make the finals at the Games. Her hometown of Memphis, Tennessee greeted her as a hero when she returned with sixth place in the 400 meter dash and a silver medal in the 4 x 400 relay. Stevens describes how Florence Griffith Joyner’s attention to appearance inspired her.

Video Oral History Interview with Rochelle Stevens, Section
A2010_091_001_006, TRT: 0:32:59 2010/07/29

Rochelle Stevens qualified for the U.S. Olympic team for a third time in 1996 despite having sustained several injuries since the last Olympic Games. She placed fourth at the trials with two injuries to her Achilles tendons. Stevens’ 4x400 meter relay team took home the gold medal in the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia. After she suffered a career-ending knee injury in 2000, Stevens was dropped by her sponsors, and she retired. The Rochelle Stevens Invitation Track Meet, which she

founded in 1990, invites college coaches to recruit and offers opportunities for young athletes to improve their skills and earn scholarships. Stevens enrolled at Columbus State University in Georgia in 1996 and finished her master's degree in public relations in 2008. She founded the Rochelle Stevens Health and Wellness Spa in 1999. Stevens reflects upon her sister, Catherine Holloway's, death in 1989, and her mother's accomplishments as a single parent. Stevens considers her life, legacy and how she hopes to be remembered.