

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Valerie Norman-Gammon

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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>	Norman, Valerie
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Valerie Norman-Gammon,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 22, 2012
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2012
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:08:43).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Media executive and television producer Valerie Norman-Gammon (1951 - ) had over thirty years of experience in mass media management, television, and mega event production. She worked with Amethyst Entertainment, Inc. Norman-Gammon was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 22, 2012, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2012_233
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Media executive and television producer Valerie Norman-Gammon was born on May 14, 1951 in New York City, New York to Irene Robinson and Edmund Greene. Norman-Gammon attended P.S. 166 Elementary School in New York City and graduated from Brandeis High School in 1968. She went on to receive her B.A. degree from Baruch College in New York City in 1979. Norman-Gammon received her M.A. degree in journalism and broadcast management from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in 1981. She worked as a legal secretary for Cravath, Swaine & Moore before working in several successful broadcasting

positions.

In 1980 Norman-Gammon worked as a talk show host for WYTV TV in Ohio. From 1981-1988 she worked as senior producer for WBBM TV in Chicago, Illinois. While with WBBM TV, Norman-Gammon produced the weekly talk show *The Lee Phillips Show* for which she won a Chicago Emmy award in 1983. During this time, she also served as executive producer for various documentary specials, including *The Sounds of Soul*, the fifth installment of the Time Warner syndicated series, *The History of Rock 'n' Roll*. In 1988, Norman-Gammon became president and CEO of Amethyst Entertainment Inc., a television, music festival production, and media company. She has produced a number of mega music events, most notably, the Essence Music Festival from 1995 to 2002. From 1994 to 2007, Norman-Gammon served as the executive producer for FOX Chicago and My Network TV's six time Emmy nominated, *Christmas Glory*.

Norman-Gammon is the recipient of three National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Image Awards for her work with *The Essence Awards* on the FOX Network. Norman-Gammon has also served as an adjunct professor in television, film, speech communications, and media relations at Johnson & Wales University. Norman-Gammon's expertise in media management, television and mega event production make her one of the top executive producers in the entertainment industry. She is a long time member of numerous media related and professional organizations, including the National Association of Television Arts and Sciences. Norman-Gammon lives with her husband, Parker Gammon, in Miami, Florida.

Valerie Norman-Gammon was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 22, 2012.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Valerie Norman-Gammon was conducted by Lynn Norment on August 22, 2012, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Media executive and television producer Valerie Norman-Gammon (1951 - ) had over thirty years of experience in mass media management, television, and mega event production. She worked with Amethyst Entertainment, Inc.

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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:**

Norman, Valerie

Norment, Lynn (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### **Subjects:**

African Americans--Interviews

Norman, Valerie--Interviews

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African American television producers and directors--Interviews.

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African American chief executive officers--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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Amethyst Entertainment, Inc.

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## **Occupations:**

Media Executive

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Television Producer

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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 Valerie Norman-Gammon, August 22, 2012. The HistoryMakers® African American Video

## 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 Valerie Norman-Gammon, Section A2012\_233\_001\_001, TRT: 1:30:19 2012/08/22

Valerie Norman-Gammon talks about her mother's family background. Her mother, Irene Hall, was born on October 7, 1926, in Senatobia, Mississippi to Verma Clair and Allen Hall. Clair and Hall divorced, and Clair spent much of her life picking tomatoes in Memphis, Tennessee. Norman-Gammon describes the sights, sounds, and smells of her childhood visits to Memphis, Tennessee, like picking tomatoes with her grandmother and watching her grandmother make ice cream. Norman-Gammon also shares memories of her great-grandmother, Mary Lee Armstrong. Irene Hall moved to New York City, New York around 1945, after which she met Norman-Gammon's father, Edmund Greene, a wealthy businessman. He and Norman-Gammon met secretly for the first time when she was nineteen, and their relationship lasted a little over a year. Norman-Gammon talks about her mother's jobs at the American Stock Exchange and Bergdorf Goodman's, and concludes by describing the

building where she grew up in Upper West Side Manhattan, New York City.

African American grandparents.

Childhood and youth--Activities--Tennessee--Memphis.

African American families.

African American mothers--New York (State)--New York.

Video Oral History Interview with Valerie Norman-Gammon, Section A2012\_233\_001\_002, TRT: 2:29:13 2012/08/22

Valerie Norman-Gammon lists her favorites. She describes her early childhood memories of playing in front of her Manhattan apartment building, and her birthday parties. She talks about her mother's move from Memphis, Tennessee to New York City, and the sacrifices she made to keep their Upper West Side Manhattan apartment. Though she grew up in the Upper West Side, Norman-Gammon spent time in Harlem. As a result, she was aware of race issues, but did not experience them directly.

Norman-Gammon discovered her love of reading in grade school, and became interested in journalism in high school after she joined her school's writing club. Norman-Gammon attended Louis D. Brandeis High School in New York City, New York, where she graduated in 1968. She then attended Manhattan Community College for two years before enrolling in Baruch College, getting married, and working as a paralegal. After graduating from Baruch College in 1979, and received a full scholarship to the University of Michigan in Ann-Arbor, Michigan.

Childhood and youth--New York (State)--New York.

African American mothers--New York (State)--New York.

African American neighborhoods--New York (State)--New York.

African Americans--Education--New York (State)--New York.

Borough of Manhattan Community College.

Bernard M. Baruch College of the City University of New York.

University of Michigan.

Video Oral History Interview with Valerie Norman-Gammon, Section

Valerie Norman-Gammon married Marvin Norman and moved to New Jersey in 1972, while working as a paralegal and attending Baruch College. The two divorced in 1975, and Norman-Gammon moved back to New York City, New York, where she continued to balance work and school. After graduating from college in 1979, Norman-Gammon moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan to attend graduate school at the University of Michigan. While attending a journalism conference in Washington, D.C., Norman-Gammon met television executive Cindy Walker. Walker offered Norman-Gammon a position co-hosting “Good Morning Youngstown” in Youngstown, Ohio in 1980, which she accepted. In 1981 she moved to Chicago, Illinois to work for Cindy Walker at WBBM-TV. Though she was offered an anchoring position, Norman-Gammon negotiated with Walker and became producer of “Common Ground,” a late-night talk show. Norman-Gammon concludes the tape by talking about people she met while producing the show.

Divorce--United States.

African American college students.

Journalism--Study and teaching.

WBBM-TV (Television station : Chicago, Ill.).

Television talk show hosts--Ohio--Youngstown.

University of Michigan.

Video Oral History Interview with Valerie Norman-Gammon, Section  
A2012\_233\_001\_004, TRT: 4:26:04 2012/08/22

Valerie Norman-Gammon talks about producing “Common Ground” and the “Lee Phillip Show,” and her relationship with Lee Phillip Bell. Norman-Gammon struggled to maintain political impartiality on “Common Ground,” which was stressful in light of Chicago, Illinois’ electric political culture in the 1980s. Norman-Gammon coped with this stress by lying in the sun, reading for pleasure, and listening to music. Norman-Gammon recalls the excitement she felt upon Mayor Harold Washington’s election in 1983. Norman-Gammon built strong personal friendships with individuals like Renee Ferguson, Lamont

Neal, and Oprah Winfrey during her time at WBBM-TV. She left her position as senior producer at the station in 1988, and worked for a year to co-author a book with Dr. Terry Mason. Norman-Gammon also founded her own production company in 1988, and successfully produced the second Essence Awards show in Chicago, Illinois. She concludes the tape by talking about the entertainment and journalism communities in Chicago, Illinois.

Bell, Lee Phillip.

Washington, Harold, 1922-1987.

WBBM-TV (Television station : Chicago, Ill.).

Mason, Terry, 1951-

Television--Production and direction.

African American authors.

Entertainment events--Illinois--Chicago.

Video Oral History Interview with Valerie Norman-Gammon, Section A2012\_233\_001\_005, TRT: 5:32:18 2012/08/22

Valerie Norman-Gammon talks about producing the Essence Awards Show, which she did for a decade. She details the evolution of the show from dinner, to stage show, to televised event. Norman-Gammon began producing Cancun Jazz Music Festival in the 1990s. She talks about the development and the production of the festival, as well as her production of similar music festivals through Mexico and the Caribbean. In 1995, she began working with Sinbad to develop the idea for, and produce, the Sinbad Soul Music Festival, as well. Norman-Gammon talks about her membership in Apostolic Church of God in Chicago, Illinois, and her relationship with the pastor, Bishop Brazier, which eventually led to a radio show and the Emmy Award-winning televised event, Christmas Glory. Norman-Gammon hopes to increase community outreach by producing more televised church events. She concludes the tape by talking about her collaboration with Quincy Jones on the show, "The History of Rock n Roll."

Entertainment events--Illinois--Chicago.

Music festival programs.

Sinbad, 1956-



African American ministers--Illinois--Chicago.

Emmy Awards.

Jones, Quincy, 1933-

Video Oral History Interview with Valerie Norman-Gammon, Section  
A2012\_233\_001\_006, TRT: 6:29:34 2012/08/22

Valerie Norman-Gammon talks about her contributions to the Essence Music Festival, which she produced from 1995 to 2002. Norman-Gammon also talks about her husband, advertising executive Parker Gammon. The two met in 1979 while Norman-Gammon was a graduate student in Michigan, but their lives went separate ways. They reconnected in 1995, and married in 1996 in Chicago, Illinois. The couple moved to Miami in 2008, where Norman-Gammon teaches at Johnson and Wales University and the University of Miami, oversees event production, and continues to produce projects. Norman-Gammon comments on the highs and lows of her life, including winning three NAACP Image Awards and her regret at not having children. She also talks about her family. In the future, Norman-Gammon hopes to continue her outreach work with young people and women. She reflects upon the women in her life she has admired, and concludes the tape by talking about how she would like to be remembered.

Entertainment events--Louisiana--New Orleans.

Marriage.

Johnson & Wales University.

University of Miami.

African American families.

African American women--Mentoring.

Video Oral History Interview with Valerie Norman-Gammon, Section  
A2012\_233\_001\_007, TRT: 7:11:46 2012/08/22

Valerie Norman-Gammon narrates her photographs.

Photographs.