

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Corynne Corbett

---

## 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>	Corbett, Corynne L., 1961-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Corynne Corbett,
<b>Dates:</b>	November 13, 2013
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2013
<b>Physical Description:</b>	10 uncompressed MOV digital video files (5:02:03).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Magazine editor Corynne Corbett (1961 - ) founder of Chic Jones Media, LLC and owner of Corynne Corbett Creative Connections, has held key editorial positions at major publications, including <i>Elle</i> , <i>Real Simple</i> , <i>Essence</i> , <i>MODE</i> , and <i>Heart &amp; Soul</i> . Corbett was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 13, 2013, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2013_302
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Magazine editor Corynne L. Corbett attended the Pratt Institute and graduated with her B.F.A. degree in fashion merchandising.

Corbett began her magazine publishing career at *Elle* magazine in 1985, and was promoted from editorial assistant to senior beauty, health and fitness editor. From 1993 to 1997, Corbett was the owner of Corynne Corbett Creative Connections where she worked on projects that ranged from freelance writing to advertising and special events. She was then hired at *Mode* magazine as executive editor and senior editor before being promoted to editor-in-chief. After a brief stint as editor-in-chief at *Heart & Soul* magazine from 2001 to 2003, Corbett joined *Real Simple* magazine. While there, she served as beauty and wellness director before being promoted to executive editor. In 2010, Corbett was named beauty editor at *Essence* magazine where she served for three years.

Corbett also founded Chic Jones Media, LLC in 2008, which later launched several websites and media outlets, including “That Black Girl Site,” “My Black Girl Site,” “My Black Girl Blogging,” “The Grown Diaries,” and “My Black Girl Radio.” She has also written for such publications as *Self* magazine, *Town & Country* magazine, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *Ebony* magazine.

Corbett has appeared as a beauty and style expert on several shows, including *Tia & Tamera*, *Better TV*, *Good Day New York*, the *Dr. Steve Show*, *The View*, *Good Morning America*, *Today in New York*, *Positively Black*, and *E!*, among others. In addition, she has served as a brand strategist and image consultant for companies such as Clinique, Maybelline New York, IMAN Cosmetics, L’Oreal, Bumble & Bumble, Black Opal, Christian Dior, Phyto, and Coty.

Throughout her career, Corbett has mentored many young women interested in succeeding in the beauty industry through her non-organization, Beauty Biz Camp. Corbett professional memberships include the American Society of Magazine Editors and the National Association of Black Journalists.

Here is a sampling of some of the publications Corbett has overseen:

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Corynne Corbett was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on November 13, 2013, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 10 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Magazine editor Corynne Corbett (1961 - ) founder of Chic Jones Media, LLC and owner of Corynne Corbett Creative Connections, has held key editorial positions at major publications, including Elle, Real Simple, Essence, MODE, and Heart & Soul.

---

## 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:

Corbett, Corynne L., 1961-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Corbett, Corynne L., 1961---Interviews

---

## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

## Occupations:

Magazine Editor

---

## 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

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Corynne Corbett, November 13, 2013. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 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 Corynne Corbett, Section A2013\_302\_001\_001, TRT: 1:32:18 ?  
Corynne Corbett was born on March 26, 1961 in Brooklyn, New York. Her mother, LaVerne Henderson Corbett, was born on June 21, 1930 in Queens, New York to Mildred Jones Henderson and Sydney Henderson. She was raised

in Harlem, attended Hunter College, and worked as a Spanish teacher. Corbett's maternal grandfather was the manager at the Harlem YMCA and her grandmother was a hairstylist. Mildred Jones Henderson was born in 1905 in Norfolk, Virginia to Anna Taylor Jones and William Pelton Jones, who was the son of Hardy Jones and Indiana Jones. Corbett's father, James Blake Corbett, was born on June 23, 1927 to George Corbett, who died before James was born, and Hattie Corbett. His family was from Virginia and Northampton County, North Carolina. James Corbett grew up in Queens, attended Brooklyn College, worked at Spofford Juvenile Detention Center, and was active as president of his local union and secretary of District Council 37. Corbett was raised in St. Albans, Queens in a very close-knit extended family.

Video Oral History Interview with Corynne Corbett, Section A2013\_302\_001\_002, TRT: 2:30:49 ?

Corynne Corbett grew up in St. Albans, Queens, New York and was close to her large extended family, including her grandparents, aunts and uncles, and lots of family friends. She remembers her father's cooking, her parents' annual Christmas party, family gatherings for the holidays, and visiting Greater Mount Pleasant Baptist Church in Brooklyn for Easter, where her great-uncle James Gay was a minister. Corbett's social life revolved around keeping the family together, and she describes her two sisters, Carolyn and Cassandra. Corbett attended P.S. 15 Jackie Robinson School, I.S. 59 Springfield Gardens, and August Martin High School in Queens, New York. She skipped both the third and eighth grade and developed an interest in art and fashion. After graduating from high school in 1977, Corbett enrolled at the Pratt Institute in New York City, New York to study fashion merchandising. She received her B.F.A. degree in 1982.

Video Oral History Interview with Corynne Corbett, Section A2013\_302\_001\_003, TRT: 3:36:05 ?

Corynne Corbett remembers her childhood family vacations to Chenango Valley State Park with other black families, where they camped and attended the New York State Fair. She attended the Pratt Institute in New York City, New York, where she received her B.F.A. in 1983. After graduating, Corbett was hired at Women's Wear Daily, where she worked as a secretary for Eleanor Barron. Barron left the journal to work in sales at Elle magazine, where she helped Corbett secure a position as an assistant to beauty editor Gabriella Neurath in May of 1985. Corbett was actively involved in shoots with photographers Marc Hispard, Gilles Bensimon and Oliviero Toscani and models like Elle Macpherson, Karen Alexander, Gail O'Neill, and Yasmin Le Bon. Elle's staff included only one black woman in a senior position, food editor Ruth Gardner-Loew. The first issue of Elle premiered in September of 1985 under publication director Regis Pagniez, and Corbett remembers the office environment under editor-in-chief Evelyn Pollard.

Video Oral History Interview with Corynne Corbett, Section A2013\_302\_001\_004, TRT: 4:30:20 ?

Corynne Corbett worked at Elle magazine from 1985 until 1993. Around 1989, Corbett also began to write for the magazine. She describes the management structure of Elle, its changing ownership, and their competition in the publishing industry. She also describes the place of African Americans at Elle and within the industry. Corbett talks about Tia Williams, Karen Brailford, Agnes Bedou, Tracy Belzano, Andrea Jackson, and Constance White, who were all at Elle at various times. Corbett also describes the careers of African Americans in the fashion and publishing industry outside of Elle, including André Leon Talley at Vogue, Mikki Taylor at Essence, Jacklyn Monk at Beauty Digest, Amy Barnett at Harper's Bazaar, and HistoryMaker Bethann Hardison's Black Girls Coalition. In 1993, Corbett left her position as senior editor at Elle and became a

consulting editor while also freelancing at Town and Country, Essence, and Self magazines.

Video Oral History Interview with Corynne Corbett, Section A2013\_302\_001\_005, TRT: 5:30:09 ?

Corynne Corbett began working at Hachette Custom Publishing in 1995, where she served as project manager for magazines for Aveda products and Mary Kay cosmetics. From 1993 until 1997, she ran Corynne Corbett Creative Connections, where she worked as a copywriter for Maybelline, L'Oreal, Christian Dior, Black Opal, and Vidal Sassoon. Corbett also worked briefly at Ladies' Home Journal before being hired by Abbie Britton to be executive editor at Mode magazine in 1999. In 2000, Corbett became editor-in-chief at Mode, a magazine marketed toward plus sized women. Corbett reflects on her career at Mode, including a cover shoot with Queen Latifah, managing employees, and nurturing new talent like Victoria Sanchez-Lincoln. She also describes the relationship Mode had with their audience and her involvement with the American Society of Magazine Editors. At the time Corbett was editor-in-chief, HistoryMakers Monique Greenwood and Susan Taylor were also in executive editorial positions at Essence magazine.

Video Oral History Interview with Corynne Corbett, Section A2013\_302\_001\_006, TRT: 6:30:17 ?

Corynne Corbett remained at Mode magazine until February 2001, when she resigned and joined Vanguard Media as editor-in-chief of Heart & Soul magazine. Corbett describes the founding of Vanguard Media by HistoryMakers Keith Clinksdale and Leonard Burnett, Jr., who published Heart & Soul, Honey, and Savoy magazines. She describes the party atmosphere of Vanguard Media under Clinksdale, Burnett, Honey magazine editor-in-chief Amy DuBois Barnett, and Savoy magazine editor-in-chief HistoryMaker Roy Johnson. Corbett reflects on the male-dominated publishing world, her first experience at a black magazine, and the prominence of Essence editor-in-chief and HistoryMaker Susan Taylor. Corbett remembers working at Heart & Soul on September 11, 2001, including her experience in the New York City office on the day of the attacks and quickly working to find a new cover for the next issue of the magazine.

Video Oral History Interview with Corynne Corbett, Section A2013\_302\_001\_007, TRT: 7:32:38 ?

Corynne Corbett was editor-in-chief of Heart & Soul magazine until Vanguard Media went bankrupt in 2003, and talks about the staff who worked there including co-founder and HistoryMaker Leonard Burnett, Jr.; Honey editors-in-chief Amy DuBois Barnett and HistoryMaker Michaela Angela Davis; and Savoy editors-in-chief HistoryMaker Roy Johnson and Ron Stodghill. In 2003, Corbett met with Time, Inc. editorial director Isolde Motley, and, in February 2004, Corbett joined Time, Inc. as the beauty and wellness director of Real Simple magazine under managing editor Kristin van Ogtrop. Corbett was promoted to co-executive director of Real Simple with Jim Baker, and oversaw their fashion, beauty, and food departments as well as television shows for PBS-TV and TLC. During this time, she also became involved with the National Association of Black Journalists and Unity. In 2008, Corbett left Time, Inc. and started Chic Jones Media, LLC, which launched That Black Girl Blogging and That Black Girl Site.

Video Oral History Interview with Corynne Corbett, Section A2013\_302\_001\_008, TRT: 8:28:49 ?

Corynne Corbett was co-executive director of Real Simple magazine until 2008. She describes Real Simple magazine, its demographics, and the events that they hosted. After she left Real Simple in 2008, Corbett started That Black Girl Site and That Black Girl Radio Show. She reflects on the changing media landscape after September 11, 2001 as well as the relationship between print media and

online media. In 2009, Corbett spoke at BlogHer about the implications of beauty articles focusing on Michelle Obama's hair and appearance. In 2010, Corbett was hired by Angela Burt-Murray to freelance for Essence magazine, and she became beauty director at Essence after Mikki Taylor left in May of 2010. At Essence, Corbett created Essence Hot Hair with Tasha Turner and Marcia Caster, produced popular all-access videos for essence.com with Tia Williams, and started the Best of Black Beauty Awards. Corbett reflects on the hiring of Ellianna Plocas and Michael Bullerdick and being laid off in 2013.

Video Oral History Interview with Corynne Corbett, Section A2013\_302\_001\_009, TRT: 9:32:33 ?

Corynne Corbett created Beauty Swirl and Beauty Biz Camp in 2013, where she coached young women on careers in beauty, marketing, and publication editing. Corbett reflects on changes in the media, beauty, and fashion, including the downsizing of magazine staffs, the rise of online magazine platforms, the increase in bloggers and vloggers and brand ambassadors in the industry, and the increase of exposure to multicultural beauty standards in magazines and manufacturing. Corbett reflects on the need for more black leadership in the beauty industry, both in the media and in manufacturing, and on the importance of a definition of black beauty that is decided by black women rather than imposed upon them. Corbett also reflects on her hopes and concerns for the African American community, her legacy, and how she would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Corynne Corbett, Section A2013\_302\_001\_010, TRT: 10:18:05 ?

Corynne Corbett narrates her photographs.