

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Derek Ferguson

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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>	Ferguson, Derek Talmar, 1965-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Derek Ferguson,
<b>Dates:</b>	July 15, 2014
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2014
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:29:01).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Entertainment executive Derek Ferguson (1965 - ) was the chief growth officer for Combs Enterprises. He also co-founded Urban Profile magazine. Ferguson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 15, 2014, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2014_139
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Entertainment company executive Derek Ferguson was born on April 20, 1965 in the Bronx, New York to Roberta Lewis Pieck and James Ferguson. He attended Stuyvesant High School, and, at the age of sixteen, was accepted into the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, where he graduated in 1985 with his B.S. degree in economics. Upon graduation, Ferguson was hired as an auditor and mergers and acquisitions analyst at Coopers and Lybrand (now PricewaterhouseCoopers) and became a certified public accountant. In 1988, he co-founded and served as chief operating officer of Urban Profile Communications Inc., which produced the *Urban Profile* lifestyle magazine. In

1990, Ferguson received his M.B.A. degree from Harvard Business School, where he was also vice president of the African American Student Association.

In 1991, Ferguson sold Urban Profile Communications Inc. and secured a position at Bain and Company in Boston, Massachusetts. At Bain, he became one of the first two African Americans to be promoted to manager. In 1996, he was named vice president of worldwide finance at Sony BMG Entertainment, and was then appointed vice president of finance and operations for BMG Special Products. In 1998, Ferguson was hired as Bad Boy Worldwide Entertainment Group's chief financial officer, where he was responsible for business development, business planning and forecasting, and financial operations of the Bad Boy family of companies. Ferguson has since been named chief growth officer of Bad Boy Worldwide Entertainment Group and reports directly to the company's chairman, Sean "Diddy" Combs.

Ferguson is a member of New York Covenant Church in New Rochelle, New York, where he is the leader of the Economic Justice ministry. Through this ministry, the Church has launched various businesses, including Cross Trainers Apparel, Covenant Building Services and Life Music. In addition, Ferguson has held bible studies for employees at Bad Boy Worldwide for a number of years.

His awards include the Maggie L. Walker Award for the African American at the Wharton School with the highest grade point average, and the Emma Higginbotham award for academic achievement and community involvement.

Ferguson is married to Regina Bullock Ferguson. They have three children; Reginald, Maya and Peri. Derek Ferguson was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on May 5, 2014.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Derek Ferguson was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on July 15, 2014, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Entertainment executive Derek Ferguson (1965 - ) was the chief growth officer for Combs Enterprises. He also co-founded Urban Profile magazine.

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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:

Ferguson, Derek Talmar, 1965-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Ferguson, Derek Talmar, 1965---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:**

Entertainment Chief Executive

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

EntertainmentMakers

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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 Derek Ferguson, July 15, 2014. 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 Derek Ferguson, Section  
A2014\_139\_001\_001, TRT: 1:28:43 2014/07/15

Derek Ferguson was born April 20, 1965 in Yonkers, New York to Roberta Lewis Pieck and James Ferguson. His paternal grandfather, Walter Ferguson, Sr., was originally from Virginia, where he owned a trucking company, and passed as white to acquire white clients. After graduating from high school, Ferguson's father moved to Baltimore, Maryland for a short time, before founding his own trucking business in the Bronx, New York. Ferguson's mother was raised in Gladstone, Virginia, where her parents, McKinley Lewis and Flossie Lewis, owned farmland. After completing one year in college, she moved to New York City to live with her sister. There, she reconnected with Ferguson's father, whom she knew from childhood. The two married in 1958 at Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York City, and settled in Yonkers to raise their family. Ferguson attended public schools in the Bronx, where he was placed in the SP Program, which allowed advanced students to skip the eighth grade. Ferguson also describes his two siblings.

Video Oral History Interview with Derek Ferguson, Section  
A2014\_139\_001\_002, TRT: 2:30:43 2014/07/15

Derek Ferguson was raised in the Bronx, New York, where his father, James Ferguson, owned a trucking company. Growing up, Ferguson, alongside his mother, Roberta Lewis Pieck, and two siblings, helped operate the business, and Ferguson learned the fundamentals of accounting and bookkeeping. His family owned a home in the predominantly black and Latino neighborhood of

Soundview, where they hosted community gatherings. His father also helped support the community by employing many of their neighbors. As a young child, Ferguson played sports, collected baseball cards and kept a meticulous record of player statistics. He began his education at P.S. 69 The New Visions School, but ultimately transferred to C.S. 232 in the Bronx. Once that school closed, he attended P.S. 152 Evergreen and J.H.S. 125 Henry Hudson, where he excelled math and science. Eventually, Ferguson tested out of the eighth grade, and scored well above average on the high school advanced enrollment test. He chose to attend Stuyvesant High School.

Video Oral History Interview with Derek Ferguson, Section  
A2014\_139\_001\_003, TRT: 3:31:05 2014/07/15

Derek Ferguson was thirteen years old when he entered Stuyvesant High School in New York City. There, he joined the basketball team, and was a member of a statistics club. During this period, he also became a deejay, and started mixing music and making tapes with his brother, Gregory Ferguson, who frequently introduced him to new music. After graduating from high school in 1981, he enrolled in the accounting program at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he continued to play basketball. During the summers, he interned for Coopers and Lybrand, and was later offered a full time position. Upon graduating, he received the Maggie L. Walker Award for earning the highest grade point average among the African American students within the program. In 1985, he joined the audit department at Coopers and Lybrand, where he was mentored by executives Anthony Anderson and Gil Harris. During this time, he also cofounded Urban Profile magazine with Keith Clinkscales.

Video Oral History Interview with Derek Ferguson, Section  
A2014\_139\_001\_004, TRT: 4:29:16 2014/07/15

Derek Ferguson enrolled at Harvard Business School in 1988, where he and Keith Clinkscales started Urban Profile magazine. Urban Profile covered contemporary issues from a bipartisan, African American perspective.

Serving as the COO, Ferguson worked alongside individuals like Armstrong Williams, Leonard Burnett, Jr. and Douglass Austin. While attending Harvard Business School, Ferguson and Clinkscales also handled the publishing and distribution of the school handbook, in addition to bringing in high-end advertisers. After graduating with his M.B.A degree, Ferguson secured a position at Bain and Company in Boston, Massachusetts, where he was assigned to the retail and consumer products department. In this capacity, he helped structure the merger of Camelot Music by the Trans World Entertainment Corporation. Ferguson also spearheaded the initiative for minority recruiting. In 1996, he left Bain and Company to become the vice president of worldwide finance at Bertelsmann Music Group.

Video Oral History Interview with Derek Ferguson, Section  
A2014\_139\_001\_005, TRT: 5:31:58 2014/07/15

Derek Ferguson served as vice president of worldwide finance at Bertelsmann Music Group, and oversaw their joint ventures with Bad Boy Records and LaFace Records. During this period, he met hip hop artist and Bad Boy Records and Combs Enterprises founder, Sean Combs, who eventually offered him the position of chief financial officer at Combs Enterprises, which Ferguson accepted in 1998. Prior to his arrival there, Combs Enterprises finalized a multimillion dollar advancement deal with Arista Records to launch the Sean Jean clothing line. Ferguson then supervised the company's partnership with Fashion Ventures to manufacture the line which experienced instant success upon its debut in 1999. He also managed Combs Enterprises other ventures including Bad Boy Records and Justin's restaurant and bar in Atlanta, Georgia and its second location in New York City. At this point, Ferguson talks about the challenges in the music industry in the early 2000s, and the artists signed to Bad Boy Records.

Video Oral History Interview with Derek Ferguson, Section  
A2014\_139\_001\_006, TRT: 6:29:23 2014/07/15

Derek Ferguson served as chief financial officer of Combs Enterprises, where he managed the financial aspects of each of its subsidiaries. The company obtained full

ownership after buying back their stake from Arista Records. Then, Warner Music Group purchased a fifty percent share of the company for thirty million dollars to become a joint venture partner. With the success of the Sean Jean clothing line, Combs Enterprises established Blue Flame, which operated as an in-house marketing firm that also offered services to outside companies. In 2007, Combs Enterprises launched the Revolt media network that focused on music television programming; and in 2013, it was distributed by Comcast Corporation. In that same year, Combs Enterprises partnered with manufacturer Diageo plc to rebrand the Ciroc ultra-premium vodka. Combs Enterprises was then approached by actor Mark Wahlberg to brand and distribute the enhanced bottled water AQUAhydrate. At this point, Ferguson talks about the marketing for AQUAhydrate.

Video Oral History Interview with Derek Ferguson, Section  
A2014\_139\_001\_007, TRT: 7:27:53 2014/07/15

Derek Ferguson was the chief financial officer of Combs Enterprises starting in 1998. He was later promoted to chief growth officer and became more involved with supervising the new businesses within the portfolio. During his time at Combs Enterprises, Ferguson started an after work bible study. Because of the widespread interest in the bible study, he added more sessions, and organized a worship service at the company. Ferguson talks about his plans for the future, and reflects upon his own legacy as well as the legacy of his generation. He also describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community, and talks about the individual's role in collective action. Ferguson concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.