

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Matrice Ellis-Kirk

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Ellis-Kirk, Matrice, 1961-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Matrice Ellis-Kirk,
Dates:	March 16, 2017
Bulk Dates:	2017
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:21:15).
Abstract:	Management executive Matrice Ellis-Kirk (1961 -) served as an investment banker with Apex Securities for several years before becoming an executive search agent with RSR Partners. Ellis-Kirk also served as the first African American first lady of Dallas, Texas. Ellis-Kirk was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 16, 2017, in Dallas, Texas. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2017_071
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Management executive Matrice Ellis-Kirk was born on March 9, 1961 in Cleveland, Ohio. She earned her B.A. degree in economics from the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1982.

Ellis-Kirk began her career as an officer in commercial banking at MBank in Dallas, Texas. In 1987, she became the director of the Dallas Area Rapid Transit's Office of Management and Budget, and remained in that position until 1993. Ellis-Kirk then joined Apex Securities as vice president and office manager until 1995, when she began serving as a consultant with Spencer Stuart. In 1999, Ellis-Kirk was hired by Heidick & Struggles International, Inc. and later became a managing partner at the firm. She joined RSR Partners in 2014 as the managing director.

Ellis-Kirk received the Spirit of the Centennial Award from the City of Fair Park, Texas in 2001. She was also the recipient of the Dallas Historical Society's Jubilee History Makers Award in 2015. The following year, Ellis-Kirk was named to *D Magazine's* "Dallas 500" list.

Ellis-Kirk served as a board member for many organizations, including for the Dallas Museum of Art, the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts Foundation, The Woman's Museum, the Dallas Symphony Association, and North Texas Tollway Authority. She also served on the board of directors for ACE Cash Express, on the Executive Committee for the Texas Business Hall of Fame Foundation, on the executive board for Southern Methodist University's Cox School of Business, and on the University of Pennsylvania's Board of Visitors. She was a member of the World Economic Forum's Global Council on Women's Empowerment, a member of the advisory board for the Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, a trustee for the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Foundation, a member of the Dallas chapter of the National Association of Corporate Directors, and chairwoman for the AT&T Performing Arts Center. In 2013, Ellis-Kirk was appointed to the President's Commission on White House Fellowships by President Barack Obama.

Ellis-Kirk and her husband, Ron, have two children, Elizabeth and Catherine

Matrice Ellis-Kirk was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on March 16, 2017.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Matrice Ellis-Kirk was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 16, 2017, in Dallas, Texas, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Management executive Matrice Ellis-Kirk (1961 -) served as an investment banker with Apex Securities for several years before becoming an executive search agent with RSR Partners. Ellis-Kirk also served as the first African American first lady of Dallas, Texas.

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:

Ellis-Kirk, Matrice, 1961-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Ellis-Kirk, Matrice, 1961- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Management Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

BusinessMakers

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 Matrice Ellis-Kirk, March 16, 2017. 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 Matrice Ellis-Kirk, Section A2017_071_001_001, TRT: 1:30:26
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Matrice Ellis-Kirk was born on March 9, 1961 in Cleveland, Ohio to Saralynn Grant Ellis and Frank Ellis. Her paternal family lived in Edwight, West Virginia,

where her grandmother, Lillian Miller Bowden, was born to Bertha Miller and Lindsey Miller. Ellis-Kirk's paternal grandmother later married William Ellis, and settled in Cleveland during the 1950s. Ellis-Kirk's maternal grandmother, Renell Roquemore Grant, was born in Butler, Georgia to an African American mother and a white father. She married Milton Grant, and together they raised several children, including Ellis-Kirk's mother. After completing one year at Fort Valley State College in Fort Valley, Georgia, Ellis-Kirk's mother spent the summer in Cleveland, where she met Ellis-Kirk's father. They soon married, and moved to Detroit, Michigan in search of work, leaving Ellis-Kirk in the care of her paternal grandmother and great-grandmother. Ellis-Kirk's father struggled with a drug and gambling addiction, and was largely absent from the home.

Video Oral History Interview with Matrice Ellis-Kirk, Section A2017_071_001_002, TRT: 2:30:53
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Matrice Ellis-Kirk attended John W. Raper Elementary School in Cleveland, Ohio, where she was allowed to skip the third grade. After making a case for girls to be allowed to wear pants to school during the winters, she succeeded in changing the dress code in the public schools. She participated in an exchange program called Friendly Town, which placed underprivileged African American students with families from other parts of the city for one day. At this time, she also visited the Karamu House, where she met actress Ruby Dee. Ellis-Kirk briefly attended Foch Junior High School in Detroit, Michigan before returning to Cleveland, where she enrolled at Lulu Diehl Junior High School. While spending time at her paternal grandmother's Laundromat, Ellis-Kirk read *The Wall Street Journal* and aspired to become an investment banker. After her second year at East High School, she was accepted into the A Better Chance program, and transferred to Mount Greylock Regional High School in Williamstown, Massachusetts.

Video Oral History Interview with Matrice Ellis-Kirk, Section A2017_071_001_003, TRT: 3:21:16
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Matrice Ellis-Kirk graduated in 1978 from Mount Greylock Regional High School in Williamstown, Massachusetts, and then entered the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. There, she majored in economics, and aspired to a career in investment banking. In her free time, Ellis-Kirk volunteered with Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, and participated in marches on campus, demanding for better recruitment of African American students. During Ellis-Kirk's time in Philadelphia, Reverend Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr. became the city's first African American mayor. At this point in the interview, Ellis-Kirk compares Goode's tenure with that of Mayor Carl Stokes in her hometown of Cleveland, Ohio. Ellis-Kirk graduated in 1982 and moved to Dallas, Texas. Soon after her arrival, she was hired as an account manager at Mercantile National Bank, where she was one of only four African Americans. In 1984, Ellis-Kirk met her husband, Ron Kirk, at a banquet, and the two began dating later that year.

Video Oral History Interview with Matrice Ellis-Kirk, Section A2017_071_001_004, TRT: 4:28:52
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Matrice Ellis-Kirk was one of the few African American bankers at Mercantile National Bank in Dallas, Texas during Reverend Jesse L. Jackson's presidential run in 1984. Although Jackson was unsuccessful, his campaign helped her better articulate the need for workplace diversity. Ellis-Kirk left in 1987, and was hired as the head of financial planning and analysis for the Dallas Area Rapid Transit system. She married Ron Kirk in 1987, and their first daughter was born two years later. In 1993, Ellis-Kirk achieved her dream of becoming an investment

banker when she joined Apex Securities. At this time, she became involved with the Young Women's Christian Association and the Junior League of Dallas. She was also nominated by Texas Governor Ann Richards to the Texas Insurance Purchasing Alliance board and the Texas Growth Fund board. When her husband decided to run for mayor in 1995, Ellis-Kirk supported his campaign. After his election, she stepped down from Apex Securities to avoid any conflicts of interest.

Video Oral History Interview with Matrice Ellis-Kirk, Section A2017_071_001_005, TRT: 5:29:48 ?

Matrice Ellis-Kirk used her platform as the first lady of Dallas, Texas to improve the lives of girls and women in the city; and her activities included helping various organizations to raise funds. In 1996, she was recruited to work at the executive search firm Spencer Stuart. After three years, she transitioned to Heidrick and Struggles International Inc., where she managed the company's diversity practice. In the early 2000s, she joined the boards of the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts, and the Ace Cash Express Inc. During her tenure, she advocated for financial education in minority communities. Ellis-Kirk was appointed to the North Texas Tollway Authority in 2011, and served on the President's Commission on White House Fellowships, starting in 2013. That same year, Ellis-Kirk moved to the boutique executive search firm of RSR Partners, where she was eventually promoted to managing director of the Dallas office. In 2015, Ellis-Kirk was named chairman of the Dallas Performing Arts Center.

Video Oral History Interview with Matrice Ellis-Kirk, Section A2017_071_001_006, TRT: ?

Matrice Ellis-Kirk served on the advisory board of the Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts after her youngest daughter graduated from the school. Its notable alumni includes singer-songwriter Edie Brickell, singer Erykah Badu and jazz trumpeter Roy Hargrove. Ellis-Kirk talks about her daughters; Elizabeth Alexandra Kirk, who specialized in intellectual property and restitution at Fordham University School of Law in New York City, and Catherine Ellis Kirk, who became a professional dancer. Ellis-Kirk reflects upon her life and legacy, and describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community. She concludes the interview by describing how she would like to be remembered.