

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with McGhee Williams Osse

PERSON

Osse, McGhee Williams, 1952-

Alternative Names: McGhee Williams Osse;

Life Dates: November 10, 1952-

Place of Birth: Columbus, Georgia, USA

Work: Chicago, Illinois

Occupations: Advertising Executive; Advertising Chief Executive

Biographical Note

Advertising executive McGhee Williams Osse was born on November 10th in Columbus, Georgia to Sallie Mae Gamble McGhee and Nelson McGhee. After earning her B.A. degree in English at Spelman College and completing post-graduate coursework in advertising at the University of South Carolina. Osse worked as a traffic manager for WSB-Radio Atlanta and was later hired as a copy-editor and layout artist at Sears; and she went on to work as a field marketing manager for KFC, and a marketing manager at General Mills Restaurant Group, and a marketing director for RTM, Inc.

In 1986, Osse joined Burrell Communications Group, a black owned advertising agency and ultimately became general manager of the Atlanta office, working with clients like Coca-Cola, Georgia Power, and Bell South Yellow Pages. In 1996, Osse became an equity partner at Burrell Communications in Chicago, where she led the company's entry into digital and interactive marketing. Osse also started Burrell's Yurban marketing initiative which became the industry's gold-standard in reaching youth and young adult during the early days of Hip Hop. Following the retirement of founder Thomas J. Burrell in 2004, Osse and Fay Ferguson became co-CEOs of Burrell Communications. Under Osse's leadership, Burrell Communications launched several successful campaigns for Procter and Gamble, Verizon and American Airlines. In 2015, presidential candidate Hilary Clinton hired Burrell Communications to handle the advertising for her campaign – marking the agency's official launch of a political practice.

Osse has served on several boards, including the American Association of Advertising Agencies (4A's) Regional Board of Directors; Ad Council Chicago Leadership Committee; and the Mosaic Council Executive Committee (American Advertising

Federation). She has also been actively involved with the Partnership for A Drug-Free America, the Clear Channel Community Board of Advisors, the Foundation for Sarcoidosis Research, and Medical Wings International.

Osse received numerous awards and accolades for her career in advertising, including the Chicago Minorities in Business Leadership Award in 2007, Ebony's outstanding women in marketing and communication award and the 'advertising legend' award from the ADCOLOR industry coalition. She was also honored by the National Alliance of Market Developers and the Black United Fund of Illinois. Under her leadership, Burrell Communications was named Black Enterprises Advertising Agency of the Year as well as awarded the Minority Marketing and Communications Firm of the Year Award in 2015.

McGhee Williams Osse was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on February 19, 2018.

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