Julieanna L. Richardson, Founder and Executive Director, The HistoryMakers

She graduated from Brandeis University in 1976 with a B.A. in Theatre Arts and American Studies. It was during her studies at Brandeis that she first experienced the power of oral history, while conducting independent research on the Harlem Renaissance. While exploring the collections of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City, Richardson interviewed butterfly Mcclain and Law Whipper as part of her project. Having access to these poignant little stories "made the historical really come alive for me," says Richardson. From this early exposure, the seeds for The HistoryMakers project first took root.

Case:

Richardson received her JD in 1988 from Harvard Law School. She worked as a corporate lawyer at Jenner & Block prior to joining the early 1980s as the Cable Administrator for the City of Chicago's Office of Cable Communications. There she established the Chicago Cable Commission, the City's regulatory body. She went on to found Shop-Chicago, a regionally based home shopping channel. For eight years, her production company, SCTN Teleproductions, managed three local cable channels for TCI, the nation's largest cable operator. SCTN Teleproductions served as the production arm for CSPIA. Its clients also included BETX, Peoples Energy, ESPN, the Economic Club of Chicago, AT&T Broadband, and Prime Cable.

The HistoryMakers

The HistoryMakers is a national, 501 (c)(3) non-profit educational institution based in Chicago, committed to preserving, developing, and providing easy access to an internationally recognized archival collection of thousands of African American video oral histories. Richardson serves as the Founder and Executive Director of The HistoryMakers.

Richards founded The HistoryMakers in 1999, which over seven years has quickly grown into a vibrant national initiative. The goal of The HistoryMakers is to create, over a five-year period, a unique, one-of-a-kind national video archive of 5,000 first-person narratives of African American History, both known and unknown. This would represent the single largest archival project of its kind since the recording of former slaves during the VHP program of the 1930s. The purpose of this archive is to edutainment and to show the breadth and depth of this important American history as told by the first person to highlight the accomplishments of individual African Americans across a variety of disciplines to showcase those who have played a role in African American led movements and organizations, and to preserve this material for years and generations to come, creating a priceless collection. The HistoryMakers website can be found at www.thehistormakers.com.

Julieanna Richardson resides in Chicago. The University of Illinois at Chicago's Great Cities Institute recently named Julieanna Richardson the first Venida D. Jarnett Fellow.

Photo & Bio Courtesy of The HistoryMakers