

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Diann Burns

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Burns, Diann, 1958-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Diann Burns,
Dates:	May 23, 2001
Bulk Dates:	2001
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:56:08).
Abstract:	Television news anchor Diann Burns (1958 -) was the first African American woman to anchor prime time news in Chicago on ABC's WLS-7. Burns was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on May 23, 2001, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2001_006
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Diann Burns was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on September 29, 1958, the daughter of a Methodist preacher. Surrounded by extended family for most of her childhood, she recalls the support and generosity she received growing up. Her immediate family relocated several times when she was a child, briefly living in Pittsburgh and then Cincinnati, before returning to Cleveland, where Burns remained through college and young adulthood. Diann took an interest in theater and acted during her high school and college years. After pursuing a career on stage, she turned to journalism. Burns graduated from Columbia University's prestigious Graduate School of Journalism, and worked as a general assignment reporter at the Cleveland Plain Dealer. She then moved on to become a sports editor, photographer and reporter at the black-owned Cleveland Call and Post, and later entered broadcasting with the Independent Network News of New York. In 1994, Burns was named co-anchor of the ten o'clock news at the ABC Chicago affiliate WLS-7, becoming the first African American woman to occupy such a position. Burns is committed to numerous charitable organizations, most notably the Northern Illinois Chapter of the Multiple Sclerosis Society, and the Support Group, an organization that assists high school students with school work and home life by providing tutorial and social services. She is also involved in the fight against pediatric AIDS.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Diann Burns was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on May 23, 2001, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Television news anchor Diann Burns (1958 -) was the first African American woman to anchor prime time news in Chicago on ABC's WLS-7.

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:

Burns, Diann, 1958-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Burns, Diann, 1958---Interviews

African American television journalists--Illinois--Chicago--Interviews.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Television News Anchor

HistoryMakers® Category:

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 Diann Burns, May 23, 2001. 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 Diann Burns, Section A2001_006_001_001, TRT: 0:29:12 ?

Diann Burns recalls her mother's origins and details her family's migration from southern Georgia to Ohio. She then talks about her father's family history, his migration from Mississippi to Ohio, and the family's religious roots. She then talks about her three siblings. Burns later recalls her earliest memories as a child, including the feelings she felt upon learning of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. She then describes the tight-knit community where she grew up in Ohio. Burns then details what it was like growing up as the daughter of a minister and the limits it placed on her social life. Burns describes her personality, and details the conflict it caused going against her father's authoritarian ways. Lastly, she talks about college, her first full-time job and the unexpected death of her sister.

African Americans--Migration--History--20th century.

African American families--Ohio.

African American fathers.

African American neighborhoods--Ohio.

African American college students.

Video Oral History Interview with Diann Burns, Section A2001_006_001_002, TRT: 0:30:26 ?

Diann Burns talks about her childhood personality and her early desire to learn to read. She then recalls her first childhood play and her aspirations to be in the theater. She then details her audition and first acting roles as a member of the Karamu House troupe. Diann Burns recalls her father's desire for her to attend college in the South, and her decision to go against her father's wishes. She then talks about her transfer from Cleveland State University to Columbia University in New York to study journalism and to escape the memory of her sister's death. Burns recalls her experiences at Columbia and her first television assignment working behind the scenes for WPIX-TV in Manhattan. She then talks about the work environment, racial bias and the financial stresses at the TV station that influenced her decision to return to Ohio. Diann Burns then talks about her more positive work experiences she encountered at WCMH-TV in Columbus, Ohio, and finally talks about the black women she feels are her role models.

Childhood and youth--Activities--Ohio.

Columbia University.

Discrimination in the workplace.

Cleveland State University.

African American fathers.

Broadcast journalism.

Video Oral History Interview with Diann Burns, Section A2001_006_001_003, TRT: 0:29:29 ?

Diann Burns talks about how she went about getting her audition tape seen by the General Manager at WCMH-TV in Columbus, Ohio. She then talks about how she was groomed for the position of television news anchor and recalls how she got called to interview in Chicago. Burns then discusses the casual work environment at the Columbus television station. Diann Burns shares her advice to blacks trying to enter the television broadcasting industry and then discusses how she succeeded at WLS-TV in Chicago. She then details the series of events that led to her earning the prime news anchor spots at WLS-TV. Burns talks about her experiences at WLS-TV and reflects on the culture of racism and sexism she encountered when her salary was revealed in the press. She then gives her personal philosophy on the necessity of a good education in order to succeed in life. Lastly, Burns details her research skills in relation to her personal life and how she succeeded in getting married after establishing her career.

Women television journalists--Ohio--Columbus.

Discrimination--Ohio--Columbus.

Minorities--Vocational guidance--United States.

Career development.

WLS-TV (Television station : Chicago, Ill.)

Video Oral History Interview with Diann Burns, Section A2001_006_001_004, TRT: 0:27:01 ?

Diann Burns talks about how she views her career and how her parents feel about her success. Burns then talks about what her legacy might be and shares a story about how she became a mentor to a girl wanting to become a television journalist. Lastly, Diann Burns describes photos of her family, friends and work colleagues.

Photographs.

Women television journalists--Mentoring.

African American parents--Attitudes.

Video Oral History Interview with Diann Burns, Section
A2001_006_BURNS_DIANN_06_MED_001, TRT: 0:30:56

This tape contains news stories produced by ABC-7 in 1990, 1992, and 1993.
Diann Burns is the anchor and reporter for these news stories.

Video Oral History Interview with Diann Burns, Section
A2001_006_BURNS_DIANN_06_MED_002, TRT: 0:31:08

This tape contains news stories produced by ABC-7 in 1991 and 1993. Diann
Burns is the anchor and reporter for these news stories.

Video Oral History Interview with Diann Burns, Section
A2001_006_BURNS_DIANN_06_MED_003, TRT: 0:30:00

This tape contains news stories produced by ABC-7 in 1991 and 1992. Diann
Burns is the anchor and reporter for these news stories.

Video Oral History Interview with Diann Burns, Section
A2001_006_BURNS_DIANN_06_MED_004, TRT: 0:30:00

This tape contains news stories produced by ABC-7 in 1991 and 1992. Diann
Burns is the anchor and reporter for these news stories.

Video Oral History Interview with Diann Burns, Section
A2001_006_BURNS_DIANN_06_MED_005, TRT: 0:30:00

This tape contains news stories produced by ABC-7 in 1991 and 1992. Diann
Burns is the anchor and reporter for these news stories.

Video Oral History Interview with Diann Burns, Section
A2001_006_BURNS_DIANN_06_MED_006, TRT: 0:30:00

This tape contains news stories produced by ABC-7 in 1991 and 1992. Diann
Burns is the anchor and reporter for these news stories.

Video Oral History Interview with Diann Burns, Section
A2001_006_BURNS_DIANN_06_MED_007, TRT: 0:30:00

This tape contains news stories produced by ABC-7 in 1992. Diann Burns is the
anchor and reporter for these news stories.

Video Oral History Interview with Diann Burns, Section
A2001_006_BURNS_DIANN_06_MED_008, TRT: 0:30:00

This tape contains news stories produced by ABC-7 in 1992. Diann Burns is the
anchor and reporter for these news stories.

Video Oral History Interview with Diann Burns, Section
A2001_006_BURNS_DIANN_06_MED_009, TRT: 0:30:00

This tape contains news stories produced by ABC-7 in 1992. Diann Burns is the
anchor and reporter for these news stories.

Video Oral History Interview with Diann Burns, Section
A2001_006_BURNS_DIANN_06_MED_010, TRT: 0:30:00

This tape contains news stories produced by ABC-7 in 1992 and 1993. Diann
Burns is the anchor and reporter for these news stories.

Video Oral History Interview with Diann Burns, Section
A2001_006_BURNS_DIANN_06_MED_011, TRT: 0:30:00

This tape contains news stories produced by ABC-7 in 1992 and 1993. Diann
Burns is the anchor and reporter for these news stories.

Video Oral History Interview with Diann Burns, Section
A2001_006_BURNS_DIANN_06_MED_012, TRT: 0:05:00

This tape contains a news story entitled "Mandela in New York" produced by
ABC-7 and reported by Diann Burns.