

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Marcia Cantarella

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Cantarella, Marcia Y.
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Cantarella,
Dates:	April 20, 2007 and July 20, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:52:59).
Abstract:	Foundation chief executive Marcia Cantarella (1946 -) started her career with Avon Products, Inc. and then became executive director of the National Coalition for Women's Enterprise. She served as the acting Associate Dean for Student Opportunities at Hunter College. Cantarella was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 20, 2007 and July 20, 2007, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_152
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Corporate executive and school administrator Marcia Elaine Young Cantarella was born on October 31, 1946, in Minneapolis, Minnesota to Margaret Buckner Young and late civil rights leader Whitney M. Young, Jr. Cantarella attended Bryn Mawr College and graduated with honors in 1968 after earning her B.A. degree in political science. For two years, she audited American Studies and law courses at the University of Iowa before moving to New York City in 1972.

Cantarella began working for Avon Products, Inc. in public affairs as a manager, focusing on minority and women's affairs and issues of affirmative action. In 1973, she joined the board of directors for the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies and became chair of the Committee for Board and Service Volunteers. A year later, Cantarella joined the Women and Foundations Group, became a member of the Association of Black Foundation Executives and joined the nomination and health maintenance organization committee for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Greater New York. She would remain active in all four organizations until 1980.

In 1976, Cantarella was promoted by Avon Products, Inc. to Director of Public Affairs, where she would remain for four more years. During her tenure, Cantarella revamped the Avon Products Foundation in order to focus on women's issues and moved the organization past monetary donations to focus on volunteerism. In 1980, she was again promoted by Avon, becoming Director of Special Markets, where she spent two years working with minority markets.

In 1985, Cantarella left Avon Products, Inc. and became a work and family issues consultant. Her major clients included New York University and Catalyst, Inc., an organization that works to further the roles of women in the workplace. In 1988, Cantarella was named Executive Director of the National Coalition for Women's Enterprise, a women's self-employment and advocacy organization. In 1989, Cantarella returned to school and in 1996 earned

her M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in American Studies with a concentration in American Business from New York University.

Cantarella became Director of Academic Enhancement Programs at New York University at the College of Arts and Sciences. In 1999, Cantarella was named Assistant Dean of Princeton University, where she was responsible for the Mellon Minority Undergraduate Fellowship Program. In 2002, Cantarella was named Vice President for Student Affairs at the Metropolitan College of New York and in 2005, became Acting Associate Dean for Student Opportunities at Hunter College. Cantarella continues to serve in leadership roles on not-for-profit boards and committees.

Marcia Cantarella was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on April 20, 2007 and July 20, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Marcia Cantarella was conducted by Adrienne Jones and Shawn Wilson on April 20, 2007 and July 20, 2007, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Foundation chief executive Marcia Cantarella (1946 -) started her career with Avon Products, Inc. and then became executive director of the National Coalition for Women's Enterprise. She served as the acting Associate Dean for Student Opportunities at Hunter College.

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:

Cantarella, Marcia Y.

Jones, Adrienne (Interviewer)

Wilson, Shawn (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Cantarella, Marcia Y.--Interviews

African American college administrators.

African American executives.

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Academic Administrator

HistoryMakers® Category:

EducationMakers

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 Marcia Cantarella, April 20, 2007 and July 20, 2007. 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 Marcia Cantarella, Section A2007_152_001_001, TRT: 0:30:18
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Marcia Cantarella was born on October 31, 1946 in Minneapolis, Minnesota to Margaret Buckner Young and civil rights leader Whitney Young. Her maternal grandparents, Eva Carter Buckner and Frank Buckner, originated in Kentucky, and moved to Aurora, Illinois when Cantarella's mother was young. Cantarella's paternal grandparents, Laura Ray Young and Whitney Young, Sr., were also from Kentucky, where her grandmother was a post mistress, and her grandfather served as the president of the Lincoln Institute, a vocational boarding school for African American students in Lincoln Ridge. Their three children, including Cantarella's father, all attended the Lincoln Institute, and then the Kentucky State College for Negroes in Frankfort, Kentucky. Cantarella's parents met there while her father was studying to become a doctor, although he switched to social work after serving in World War II. Cantarella's parents then settled in Minneapolis, where her mother earned a master's degree in educational psychology.

African American families--Kentucky.

African American educators.

African Americans--Kentucky--Social life and customs.

Kentucky State University--Students

African American college students--Kentucky.

African Americans--Education (Higher)--University of Minnesota.

Young, Whitney M.

African Americans--Education (Secondary)--Kentucky--Simpsonville.

Lincoln Institute (Simpsonville, Ky.).

Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Cantarella, Section A2007_152_001_002, TRT: 0:30:01
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Marcia Cantarella's father, Whitney Young, served in World War II, and then joined his wife, Margaret Buckner Young, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. There, they attended the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, where her mother earned a master's degree in education psychology, and her father completed a social work degree. When Cantarella was three years old, her father became the president of the Urban League of Nebraska, and moved her family to integrated community of Omaha, Nebraska. There, Cantarella studied ballet, and attended Lothrop Elementary School. When she was seven years old, her family moved again to Atlanta, Georgia, where Cantarella experienced segregation for the first time. She attended the Oglethorpe School, which was operated by Atlanta University, where her father was the dean of social work. In Atlanta, her father was increasingly involved in the Civil Rights Movement, and her family

attended a previously all-white Unitarian church that promoted integration and equal rights.

African American families--Nebraska--Omaha.

African Americans--Nebraska--Omaha--Social life and customs.

Civil rights movements--Georgia--Atlanta.

Unitarian--Universalist churches--Georgia--Atlanta.

United States--Race relations.

African American children.

Students--Political activity--Georgia--Atlanta.

Young, Whitney M.

Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Cantarella, Section A2007_152_001_003, TRT: 0:29:37
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Marcia Cantarella moved during the ninth grade to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where her father, Whitney Young, spent his sabbatical leave at Harvard University. While there, Cantarella attended the Cambridge School of Weston alongside James Bond, the brother of civil rights leader Julian Bond. She was involved in student council, ballet and Jack and Jill of America, Inc. After one year, her family moved to New Rochelle, New York, where her father became the director of the National Urban League, and Cantarella attended New Rochelle High School. Following her father's example, she became involved in the civil rights and anti-war movements, although she did not attend the March on Washington with her father due to safety concerns. She established a youth auxiliary at the National Urban League under her father's directorship, and attended many of the league's functions. After graduation, Cantarella matriculated at Bryn Mawr College in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania.

Unitarian--Universalist churches--Georgia--Atlanta.

Civil rights workers.

African American children--Education--Massachusetts--Cambridge.

Harvard University.

National Urban League.

Bryn Mawr College--Students.

Young, Whitney M.

Vietnam War, 1961-1975.

Civil rights movements--United States.

African American college students--Pennsylvania--Bryn Mawr.

Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Cantarella, Section A2007_152_001_004, TRT: 0:29:30
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Marcia Cantarella attended Bryn Mawr College in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, where she and her peers protested against the Vietnam War, volunteered during elections and participated in civil rights sit-ins and boycotts. While actively involved, Cantarella did not join the organizations of the time, like the Weather Underground Organization or SNCC. Between semesters, she worked at the National Urban League, The Fresh Air Fund and Senator Robert F. Kennedy's office, where she and the other female interns faced gender discrimination, and were relegated to secretarial work. Cantarella's father, Whitney Young, directed the National Urban League from 1961 until his death in 1971. During his tenure, he worked with the National Urban Coalition and the league's integrated Council of Board Members to secure equal work and housing for African Americans. The board members included Time magazine executive James A.

Linen III, civil service administrator Ersal H. Poston and labor rights attorney Theodore W. Kheel.

Vietnam War, 1965-1975--Protest movements--United States.

Students--Political activity--Pennsylvania--Bryn Mawr.

Kennedy, Robert F., 1925-1968.

Sexual division of labor.

Sex discrimination in employment.

Young, Whitney M.

Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Cantarella, Section A2007_152_001_005, TRT: 0:29:32
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Marcia Cantarella attended Bryn Mawr College in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, where she protested the school's employment of an all-black maid staff. She and her classmates presented the issue to the administration, and eventually found the women better jobs. Shortly after graduation, Cantarella married a writer, and had a son, Mark Boles. After her husband joined the Iowa Writers' Workshop, Cantarella and her family moved to Iowa City, Iowa, where she briefly attended law school. Then, her husband received a Guggenheim fellowship, and they moved to Rabat, Morocco. In 1971, Cantarella's father, Whitney Young, drowned in Nigeria; and, soon after, she divorced her husband. Upon returning to the United States, Cantarella accepted a position in the public affairs division of Avon Products Inc., where she worked on community relations and affirmative action. Two years after her divorce, Cantarella met Francesco Cantarella, a public affairs executive who had worked with her father, and the couple married in 1980.

Civil rights movements.

Bryn Mawr College.

Young, Whitney M.--Death and burial.

African American educators.

Women--Education (Higher)--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Cantarella, Section A2007_152_002_006, TRT: 0:29:47
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Marcia Cantarella began working in public affairs at Avon Products Inc. under CEO David W. Mitchell in 1972. She then moved to a management position in the advertising department, where she supervised the production of the company's marketing materials. Mitchell retired as CEO in 1979, and the company experienced financial problems under his successor, Hicks B. Waldron. Cantarella was forced to lay off a fifth of her staff, and soon left Avon Products Inc. to become a freelance business consultant. During the 1980s, the changing corporate culture led many women and people of color to leave their firms and start their own businesses, which Cantarella helped plan at her consultancy. Then, she accepted an administrative position in the Academic Achievement Program, a program for students of color at New York University's Leonard N. Stern School of Business. While there, she also earned a Ph.D. degree in American studies with a focus on business culture, under professors Paul R. Baker and Richard Sylla.

Avon Products, Inc.

African American executives.

African American students--Education (Higher)--New York (State)--New York.
New York University.

Waldron, Hicks.

Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Cantarella, Section A2007_152_002_007, TRT: 0:29:18
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Marcia Cantarella directed the Academic Achievement Program, which offered leadership opportunities and peer tutoring to students of color at New York University. In addition, she served as the sophomore and junior class advisor for the college, and taught business classes at the Gallatin School of Individualized Study. In 1999, Cantarella was invited by college dean Nancy Weiss Malkiel to become the dean of the junior class at Princeton University in Princeton, New Jersey. Cantarella remained there for three years, and resigned when her husband, Francesco Cantarella, fell ill. After his death, Cantarella returned to New York City to become the vice president of Audrey Cohen College. Frustrated by the school's lack of funding, Cantarella left to become an associate dean at Hunter College in New York City under President Jennifer J. Raab. She also served on the board of the Trickle Up program, which provided business grants to women in poverty.

African Americans--Religion.

Vocational guidance.

African American educators--New York (State)--New York.

New York University. Gallatin Division.

College students--New York (State)--New York.

Unitarianism.

African American Unitarian Universalists.

Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Cantarella, Section A2007_152_002_008, TRT: 0:24:56
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Marcia Cantarella served on the board of the Trickle Up program, a nonprofit development organization founded by Mildred Robbins Leet and Glen F. Leet to provide business grants to women in impoverished countries. Cantarella also served on the board of the Women's Leadership Exchange, which was established by Leslie Grossman to support women in corporate management positions, as well as firms owned by women. Cantarella reflects upon the status of women and people of color in the business world, and the effects of globalization. She also reflects upon her legacy, and the legacy of her family. Cantarella concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.