

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Marcia Sturdivant

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## Overview of the Collection

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| <b>Repository:</b>           | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616<br>info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com  |
| <b>Creator:</b>              | Sturdivant, Marcia M., 1956-   |
| <b>Title:</b>                | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Sturdivant,  |
| <b>Dates:</b>                | June 8, 2014   |
| <b>Bulk Dates:</b>           | 2014   |
| <b>Physical Description:</b> | 9 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:49:06).  |
| <b>Abstract:</b>             | Educator and nonprofit chief executive Marcia Sturdivant (1956 - ) , president and CEO of the Negro Educational Emergency Drive (NEED), was deputy director of the Allegheny County (Pennsylvania) Department of Human Services and administrator of the Office of Children, Youth and Families for fifteen years. Sturdivant was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on June 8, 2014, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| <b>Identification:</b>       | A2014_174  |
| <b>Language:</b>             | The interview and records are in English.  |

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Educator and nonprofit chief executive Marcia M. Sturdivant was born in West Mifflin, Pennsylvania. She received her B.A. degree in psychology and behavioral sciences from Point Park University in 1978 and her M.A. degree in criminal justice from the University of Detroit in 1980. She later earned her Ph.D. degree in educational and developmental psychology from the University of Pittsburgh in 1996.

From 1987 to 1990, Sturdivant served as director of early education programs at the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh. From 1990 to 1998, she worked in a number of positions at the Allegheny County Department of Human Services in the Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF), the second largest child welfare agency in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In 1998, she was appointed deputy director of the Allegheny County Department of Human Services and administrator of the OCYF. Sturdivant was then named president and chief executive officer of the Negro Educational Emergency Drive (NEED) in 2013. She has also served as an assistant professor at Point Park University and an adjunct faculty member in the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Pittsburgh.

Sturdivant is a past president of the Pittsburgh affiliate of the National Black Child Development Institute. She directs the Children's Church and Children's Choir at Nazarene Baptist Church in Pittsburgh, and has served as a board member of the American Association of Family Group Decision Making.

Sturdivant's honors include the Three Rivers Youth Nellie Award for Community Leadership; the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh's Whitney M. Young Jr. Service Award and Ron Brown Civic Award; The YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh Racial Justice Award; and the National Association of Black Administrators in Child Welfare Valerie Bullard Award. She has been cited by *Pittsburgh Magazine* as one of "Forty Local, Gifted and Black African American Leaders," and was recognized by the *New Pittsburgh Courier* as one of their 50 Women of

Excellence in 2012. Sturdivant has also served as a repeat participant and research panelist of the Oxford University Educational Roundtable in Oxford, England. She is married to Larry Anderson, Sr. and is the mother of two sons, Larry, Jr. and Marshall.

Marcia Sturdivant was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on June 8, 2014.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Marcia Sturdivant was conducted by Larry Crowe on June 8, 2014, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and was recorded on 9 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Educator and nonprofit chief executive Marcia Sturdivant (1956 - ) , president and CEO of the Negro Educational Emergency Drive (NEED), was deputy director of the Allegheny County (Pennsylvania) Department of Human Services and administrator of the Office of Children, Youth and Families for fifteen years.

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## 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®.

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## 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.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Sturdivant, Marcia M., 1956-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Sturdivant, Marcia M., 1956---Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## Occupations:

Educator

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Nonprofit Chief Executive

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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## 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 Sturdivant, June 8, 2014. 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).

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## 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.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

## Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Sturdivant, Section A2014\_174\_001\_001, TRT: 1:28:11  
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Marcia Sturdivant was born on March 24, 1956 in Homestead, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Her mother, Jean Clinton Barron Sturdivant, was born in 1927 in Columbus, Mississippi. Jean Sturdivant was raised by her father, Eldrew Barron, and her maternal relatives in Columbus, after her mother's death in 1930. She attended Union Academy High School in Columbus and Mary Holmes College for African American women in West Point, Mississippi. Sturdivant's maternal grandmother, Rosa Lee Brownrigg Robinson is descendent of the Brownrigg plantation in Columbus, built for General Richard T. Brownrigg. Sturdivant's father, O.C. Sturdivant, was born in 1924, also in Columbus, into a family of twelve older siblings. Her paternal grandfather, Will Sturdivant, worked as a farmer and her grandmother Clemon Sturdivant, a homemaker. O.C. Sturdivant was drafted into the U.S. Navy at the onset of World War II. Sturdivant's speaks to the history behind her family's surname as well as her father's name.

Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Sturdivant, Section A2014\_174\_001\_002, TRT: 2:28:53  
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Marcia Sturdivant's father, O.C. Sturdivant, was drafted into the U.S. Navy at the onset of World War II where he was stationed on the U.S.S. Intrepid aircraft carrier, known for having survived several enemy attacks. Sturdivant recalls her father's homecoming and his readjustment to segregation back in the southern United States. Sturdivant's family migrated from Columbus, Mississippi to Birmingham, Alabama and later to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in the Great Migration. Following his service in the military, O.C. Sturdivant was hired by the United States Bureau of Mines as a laborer in maintenance in Pennsylvania. He built the family home in West Mifflin, Pennsylvania where they moved in 1956. Sturdivant talks about her father's interest in politics, his morning ritual, her parents' voting advocacy, and their early lessons about ethnic pride and beauty standards. She also describes her likeness to her mother.

Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Sturdivant, Section A2014\_174\_001\_003, TRT: 3:27:47  
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Marcia Sturdivant talks about her siblings and her childhood in West Mifflin, Pennsylvania, a middle class suburb of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where she attended Homeville Elementary School and Junior High School. She talks about the camaraderie between the small community of black students in the West Mifflin public school system, and her experiences with racism including being asked if she was, "brown like that all over," and overhearing a grade school teacher using the N-word to address black students. She remembers the death of a cousin in the Vietnam War and the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy in 1963 and Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968. Influenced by the events, Sturdivant describes writing an essay on civil rights and Black Nationalist leaders for her sixth grade research project. The paper, however, was not accepted by the librarian who maintained that she would write about "a good American." Sturdivant, however, remembers the positive influence of her sixth grade teacher.

Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Sturdivant, Section A2014\_174\_001\_004, TRT: 4:30:49  
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Marcia Sturdivant describes her experience at Homeville Junior High School in West Mifflin, Pennsylvania as well as civil rights and Black Nationalist activity in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania during the 1960s and 1970s, including her sister's

involvement in the Black Nationalist Movement. Sturdivant was forbidden to wear an afro by her grammar school administration. In 1971, when she entered West Mifflin High School, Sturdivant became a cheerleader and remembers being called “Aunt Jemima” during a game. She describes an altercation with her typing teacher, and finding support from her math teacher and the African American faculty at West Mifflin High. In high school, Sturdivant wanted to be a plumber, before a guidance counselor and social studies teacher introduced her to careers in psychology. She talks about the experiences that influenced her childhood, including the Pentecostal church and Kennywood amusement park in Pittsburgh.

Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Sturdivant, Section A2014\_174\_001\_005, TRT: 5:29:14 ?

Marcia Sturdivant graduated from West Mifflin High School in West Mifflin, Pennsylvania in 1974. She attended Park Point College in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, earning a bachelor’s degree in psychology in 1978 before enrolling in a forensic psychology master’s program at the University of Detroit in Michigan. There, she completed a research assistantship in criminal justice and correctional science and worked in the Detroit Police Department. After earning her master’s degree in 1979, she decided not to pursue forensic psychology further. She then returned to Pittsburgh and worked as a probation officer in the Pittsburgh juvenile court system. She describes Pittsburgh’s juvenile court system in the 1980s—the system’s agenda was primarily rehabilitative—and also an instance when a child was sentenced severely based on socioeconomic biases. Sturdivant began working toward her Ph.D. degree in educational psychology at the University of Pittsburgh, where her dissertation advisor was HistoryMaker Dr. Jerome Taylor.

Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Sturdivant, Section A2014\_174\_001\_006, TRT: 6:29:41 ?

Marcia Sturdivant completed her dissertation in educational psychology on the relationship between cultural variables and parent success between 1985 through 1996. She talks about the psychological effects of stereotypes on an individual’s self-regard and about the residual impact of slavery on black American families. Sturdivant met her husband while a student at Point Park College in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and they married in 1985. From 1997 to 1998, Sturdivant worked as director for early childhood education for the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In 1998, she joined the Allegheny County Department of Human Services child welfare sector. Her goal was to increase public awareness of child abuse in the black community. Sturdivant describes contemporary methodology in the child welfare system--its current focus combines family separation and preservation methods--and addresses the controversy surrounding transracial adoption, the adoption of a child by a family of a different race.

Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Sturdivant, Section A2014\_174\_001\_007, TRT: 7:31:20 ?

Marcia Sturdivant addresses issues surrounding transracial adoption, talks about the trauma children experience in the child welfare system and describes how cultural misunderstandings can affect child welfare decisions, including an example of a woman who fed her child pot liquor that had been reported as having given the child alcohol. Sturdivant also talks about the impact of crack cocaine on families in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in the 1990s. In 1998, she was appointed Deputy Director of Children, Youth, and Families in the Allegheny County Human Services Department. Sturdivant got involved in the National

Association of Black Social Workers and the Black Administrators in Child Welfare, and was elected president of the Pittsburgh affiliate of the National Black Child Development Institute. She assumed leadership of NEED, the Negro Educational Emergency Drive in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, after the death of its former CEO and president, Sylvester Pace.

Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Sturdivant, Section A2014\_174\_001\_008, TRT: 8:13:54  
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Marcia Sturdivant describes the programs operated by NEED, the Negro Educational Emergency Drive in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Sturdivant assumed leadership of the organization after the death of its former CEO and president, Sylvester Pace. Some of NEED's initiatives include granting college scholarships, providing college counseling and organizing tours for students to visit historically black colleges and universities. Sturdivant is married to Larry Dean Anderson and the couple has two sons. She describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community, including the threat of cultural alienation. She considers what she would do differently in her life, reflects upon her professional legacy and how she would like to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Marcia Sturdivant, Section A2014\_174\_001\_009, TRT: 9:09:17  
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Marcia Sturdivant narrates her photographs.