

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Esther "E.T." Franklin

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Franklin, Esther, 1957-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Esther "E.T." Franklin,
Dates:	October 21, 2014
Bulk Dates:	2014
Physical Description:	6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:46:44).
Abstract:	Media executive and advertising executive Esther "E.T." Franklin (1957 -) was the executive vice president and director of Starcom MediaVest Group Americas Experience Strategy. She also served as a vice president at Burrell Communications and Leo Burnett Advertising. Franklin was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 21, 2014, in Evanston, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2014_257
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Media and advertising executive Esther “E.T.” Franklin was born on July 21, 1957 in Chicago, Illinois. Her mother, Dolores Johnson, was a teacher; her father, Leon Johnson, a teacher and minister. Raised in Wilberforce, Ohio and Chicago, Illinois, Franklin graduated from Evanston Township High School in 1975. She received her B.S. degree in business administration from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana in 1979 and her M.M. degree from Northwestern University’s Kellogg Business School in 1993. Franklin has also completed certificate programs at the University of Chicago and Northwestern University.

In 1980, Franklin was hired as a field project director at Market Facts, Inc. in Chicago. From 1982 to 1993, she worked for Burrell Communications, first as a market research analyst, and later as vice president and associate research director. In 1984, Franklin took a brief hiatus from Burrell Communications to work as a research manager for the Johnson Publishing Company. She was hired by Leo Burnett Advertising in 1993 and worked on various Philip Morris brands as vice president and planning director for Marlboro USA until 2001. At Leo Burnett, Franklin was instrumental in launching several corporate trend initiatives, including LeoShe, Foresight Matters and 20Twenty Vision, focused on the female consumer and twenty-something audience. She also appeared on *Oprah*, where she discussed LeoShe's research on beauty myths.

In 2002, Franklin was named senior vice president, director of consumer context planning for Starcom USA, a Starcom MediaVest Group (SMG) company. She was appointed as executive vice president, director of cultural identities of Starcom MediaVest Group in 2006, and was later promoted to executive vice president, head of SMG Americas Experience Strategy in 2011. During her time at SMG, Franklin pioneered Cultural Communication Anthropology and worked on Beyond Demographics, a research study exploring the vital role of culture and identity in reaching consumers.

Franklin has received numerous honors for her work. She was named an AdAge “Women to Watch” and received the “Changing the Game” honor from Advertising Women of New York (AWNY). Franklin was honored with the prestigious “Legend Award” at the 2011 AdColor Ceremony, and was identified as one of the Top Women Executives in Advertising & Marketing by *Black Enterprise* in both 2012 and 2013. In addition, she has published several multicultural and subculture targeting pieces, and is sought out as a speaker and panelist on all topics related to the evolving consumer landscape.

Franklin has chaired *The HistoryMakers* National Advisory Board's Advertising/Marketing Committee and sat on the global advisory committee of the World Future Society. She has also served as a board member of the Family Institute at Northwestern University and the Chicago Urban League.

Esther Franklin was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on October 21, 2014.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Esther "E.T." Franklin was conducted by Harriette Cole on October 21, 2014, in Evanston, Illinois, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Media executive and advertising executive Esther "E.T." Franklin (1957 -) was the executive vice president and director of Starcom MediaVest Group Americas Experience Strategy. She also served as a vice president at Burrell Communications and Leo Burnett Advertising.

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:

Franklin, Esther, 1957-

Harriette Cole (Interviewer)

Champagne, Curt (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Franklin, Esther, 1957---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Media Executive

Advertising Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

MediaMakers

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 Esther "E.T." Franklin, October 21, 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).

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 Esther "E.T." Franklin, Section A2014_257_001_001, TRT: 1:29:09 ?

Esther "E.T." Franklin was born on July 21, 1957 in Chicago, Illinois to Dolores Dabon Johnson and Leon Johnson. Her maternal grandfather, Lawrence Dabon, had French and Native American ancestry, and her grandmother, Ethel Cager Dabon, was African American. Franklin's mother was raised by her aunts in New Orleans, Louisiana, and later attended Xavier University of Louisiana. Franklin's paternal grandparents, Herbert Johnson and Rachel Bryant Johnson, moved from St. Gabriel, Louisiana to New Orleans, where they raised Franklin's father. After serving in the U.S. Air Force, he founded a Baptist church with his father in New Orleans, where he met Franklin's mother. They moved to the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago, where he entered the Chicago Theological Seminary, and she taught elementary school. Franklin attended Chicago's William H. Ray Elementary School until moving with her family to Wilberforce, Ohio for her father's position as Central State University's campus minister. She had two younger brothers.

Video Oral History Interview with Esther "E.T." Franklin, Section A2014_257_001_002, TRT: 2:28:56 ?

Esther "E.T." Franklin and her family left the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois in 1964. They moved to a rural community in Wilberforce, Ohio, where her father, Leon Johnson, served as the campus minister of Central State University. As a child, Franklin often attended events on the campus, which hosted speakers like Reverend Jesse L. Jackson and social activist H. Rap Brown. With her younger brothers, Leonidas Johnson and Worthington Johnson, she participated in the band and the junior usher board at the campus church, which was located in the student union. During this time, Franklin also joined an all-black Girl Scout troop, where she experienced discrimination from customers during the annual cookie sale because of her darker skin. Franklin rode the bus to her elementary school in Xenia, Ohio. She aspired to a career as a veterinarian or a musician, and dreamt of visiting the predominantly African American Roxbury neighborhood in Boston, Massachusetts.

Video Oral History Interview with Esther "E.T." Franklin, Section A2014_257_001_003, TRT: 3:29:55 ?

Esther "E.T." Franklin moved with her family to Evanston, Illinois when she was a teenager. She graduated from Evanston Township High School in 1975, and went on to attend the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she pledged to the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. Although she stopped attending church, she remained interested in gospel music, which informed her spirituality. Upon graduating in 1979, she worked as a sales clerk at Carson Pirie Scott Co. She then served as an administrative secretary at Northwestern University in Evanston, and later became a field project director at the market research company Market Facts, Inc. In 1982, Franklin was hired as a researcher at the Burrell Advertising Agency in Chicago, Illinois. In the mid-1980s, she worked briefly as a research manager at Johnson Publishing Company under the direction of John H. Johnson. Motivated to develop her research and

management skills, she returned to work at the Burrell Advertising Agency as an account manager.

Video Oral History Interview with Esther "E.T." Franklin, Section A2014_257_001_004, TRT: 4:32:36 ?

Esther "E.T." Franklin was a market researcher at the Burrell Advertising Agency in Chicago, Illinois when she acquired her nickname, E.T., in 1982. Four years later, she gave birth to her daughter, Lauren Turrell. In 1993, she received her graduate degree from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Later that year, she was hired as a market researcher at the Leo Burnett Company, Inc., where her main client was the tobacco manufacturer Philip Morris Inc. In the 1990s, Franklin worked on the LeoShe initiative, which aimed to improve women-oriented marketing strategies. As a result of the initiative's success, Franklin was invited to talk about her findings on 'The Oprah Winfrey Show.' Around this time, Franklin volunteered her marketing expertise at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio. In 2001, she joined the media division of Starcom Worldwide, under the leadership of CEO Renetta Earledeane McCann.

Video Oral History Interview with Esther "E.T." Franklin, Section A2014_257_001_005, TRT: 5:27:39 ?

Esther "E.T." Franklin became a vice president and director of consumer context planning at Starcom Worldwide in 2002. In this role, she implemented summary vignettes at the start of each episode of The History Channel's 'Band of Brothers' miniseries. Franklin was recognized as one of the Ad Age Women to Watch in 2004. At this point, she talks about other female advertising executives, including Renetta Earledeane McCann and Ann Fudge. Franklin was asked to serve as the Starcom specialist for African American consumers, but declined the offer because it paralleled her previous work at the Burrell Advertising Agency. Instead, she was promoted in 2006 to the role of cultural identities director at the Starcom Mediavest Group, Inc. There, she led the Beyond Demographics marketing project, which worked closely with local communities. In 2011, Franklin became the director of SMG Americas Experience Strategy at Starcom Mediavest Group, Inc. She talks about the impact of digital media on the marketing profession.

Video Oral History Interview with Esther "E.T." Franklin, Section A2014_257_001_006, TRT: 6:18:29 ?

Esther "E.T." Franklin served as the director of SMG Americas Experience Strategy at the Starcom Mediavest Group, Inc. In the mid-2000s, she encouraged the company to market to specific minority groups, as many advertising agencies shifted to a more general marketing approach. Franklin talks about the future of the advertising industry, and shares her advice for aspiring marketing professionals. Franklin reflects upon her life, legacy and how she would like to be remembered. She concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.