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**Title**

Darlene Franklin Oral History Interview and Transcript

**Date**

June 9, 2018

**Extant**

1 hour 34 minutes and 1 transcript

**Abstract**

In this oral history, Darlene Franklin recalls coming out, joining and becoming ordained in Full Truth Fellowship of Christ, in Detroit, working as a pastor, running an affirming radio show on a Christian station, coordinating hotlines for AIDS/HIV and domestic violence, and giving eulogies for LGBT people at more conservative churches.

**Biographical**

Darlene Franklin grew up as part of a Black working class family in East Orange, New Jersey. Darlene is the eighth child out of ten with three older sisters, four older brothers, and two younger brothers. As a child, Darlene remembers playing with her siblings and being very active in her community and neighbors. She also remembers spending a lot of time in the kitchen with her mother. Although she wasn't raised in the church because her mother disliked church politics, she was instilled with Catholic values and her mother often preached the "Golden Rule", to love God and treat others the way you would want to be treated.

Darlene knew she was attracted to women since she was seven years old. She remembers going home and telling one of her sisters that she wanted to have a girlfriend and her sister saying that she couldn't. As she grew up, she tried to hide her sexuality, but she still felt like she didn't fit in no matter how hard she tried to conform. She had a hard time in school because she was bullied for being different. Because of this, although Darlene enjoyed learning and school, she would skip and be suspended many times. She also started drinking and smoking at a very young age.

Darlene also had a hard home life due to her father's alcoholism and abuse. Since she couldn't find a safe haven at home or school, Darlene found herself making friends with other families in her community and spending time with people outside of her home. Although she was seen as a troublemaker at school, Darlene did have good grades and passed high school. About a year after graduating, she decided to join the Air Force so she could escape from home and receive benefits such as paid college tuition. She chose the Air Force because she wanted to be different from her other siblings who enlisted in the Army. She originally planned to enlist in the Navy but while talking to a recruiter a sailor came up to her and made sexually implicit comments; when the recruiter did nothing to stop these comments, Darlene left and went straight to the Air Force recruitment office.

Darlene served in the Air Force for seven years. While in the military and stationed in Haver, Montana she married a man ten years her senior despite knowing that she didn't love him. She believed that marriage would help "kill" her homosexuality. She had two daughters with her husband, before realizing that she had married a man just like her father and that she needed to end their marriage. She decided to discharge from the Air Force and moved to Mount Clemmens, Michigan, with two of her older sisters. There she and her sisters lived together and raised their combined eight children together.

It was during this time that Darlene began to form a personal connection to God. She began going to Greater Morning Star Missionary Baptist church. During her time at Greater Morning Star, she started a relationship with a fellow female congregant. Others in the church discovered this and she was baptized at this church. It was during this time that Darlene also felt called to learn more and pursue ministry. She would soon leave Greater Morning Star because they preached homophobic messages.

In 1993, Darlene joined a church in Detroit. She loved being a member of this church as it has other gay and black members in the congregation and their message was love for all. Here the ministry work was to go out into the community and work with those that were suffering with HIV/AIDS; people who had otherwise been left behind by their families. Darlene previously worked in domestic violence shelters and very much wanted to help people in her work and ministry.

She later joined the Full Truth Fellowship of Christ that preached a similar message of all-encompassing love and was accepting of LGBTQ voices. During her time pastoring at Full Truth, she wanted to make sure the church building was paid off and that clergy were being sent out into the surrounding area to help those most in need. Darlene also had a radio show for about two years, where she shared the church's message and stories of those in the community. Darlene also worked to bring classes to the church for those that sought ministry education but did not have previous degrees or higher education. During her time at Full Truth, she also embraced masculinity and often dressed in suits; she felt it was important for people to see her in typically-male clothes while preaching the word. She served at Full Truth Church for ten years.

Afterward, Darlene went to Inner Vision church. However, she left in 2010 to go back to school. By 2018, Darlene had three degrees. In her ministry, she works to heal people and help them discover their gift and how to use that gift. She also supports other activists the best that she can and helps to bring healing to divided communities. She has been married to her wife, Glenda for six years and is the grandmother to four grandchildren.

### **Scope and Content**

Darlene Franklin recalls growing up with limited religious influences, although her father was a Baptist deacon. She attended a Baptist church as an adult, where she met her first female partner, but left the church due to homophobia. She then went to Full Truth Fellowship of Christ in Detroit, where she was ordained, while also coordinating hotlines for AIDS/HIV and domestic violence. Her activism has also involved running an affirming radio show on a Christian station, and giving eulogies for LGBT people at more conservative churches.

This interview was conducted by Dr. Monique Moultrie, an Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Georgia State University, and author of *Hidden Histories: Faith and Black Lesbian Leadership*. She conducted this interview as a consultant of LGBTQ-RAN as part of the oral histories project.

### **Access**

Open to all researchers.

<https://lgbtqreligiousarchives.org/oral-histories/darlene-franklin>.

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### **Languages**

Collection material is in English

### **Cite as**

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### **Tags**

Black

Clergy Activist

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Franklin, Darlene