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**Title**

Sylvia Rhue Oral History Interview and Transcript

**Date**

February 4, 2011

**Extant**

1 hours, 12 minutes interview and 1 transcript

**Abstract**

In this oral history Dr. Sylvia Rhue, a writer, activist, filmmaker, and producer, discusses co-producing the film "All God's Children." She was the first African American to receive a Doctorate in Human Sexuality, and is an expert on the "ex-gay" movement. Serving in multiple roles in Black and gay organizations, she has fought for marriage equality and reproductive rights.

**Biographical**

Sylvia Rhue is a writer, activist, filmmaker, and producer. She is a native of southern California where she was raised as a 4th generation Seventh Day Adventist. She was reared in a middle-class environment with a family and religious community that put a high value on education. Equal to the commitment to education was their commitment to religious activism, and Sylvia was an active youth in her Seventh Day Adventist church. This dual commitment of faith and education led her to attend Oakwood College, a Seventh Day Adventist affiliated church in Alabama, where she majored in Psychology/Sociology. After completing this degree, Sylvia moved back to California in 1969 to attend UCLA and obtain a Masters Degree in Social Work, where she focused on developmental disabilities.

Upon completion of this degree in 1971, she began working for the Regional Center for the Developmentally Disabled and transitioned to a position as a psychiatric social worker for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Hospital in South Central Los Angeles, CA. As part of her job, she was trained to be a sex therapist and eventually worked at a sex therapy clinic specifically working

within the African American community. She later went on to receive a Doctorate in Human Sexuality from the Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality in San Francisco, CA. She was the first African American to receive this degree. As a part of her dissertation, she was able to create a documentary on black lesbians, which re-kindled her childhood interest in making movies. This passion culminated in her co-producing with Dr. Dee Mosbacher and Frances Reid, the acclaimed documentary "All God's Children," a film that dealt with African American values, gays and lesbians in the civil rights movements, and African American responses to homophobia.

Sylvia joined the Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum at its inception, and was not the end of her organizing on the behalf of the LGBT community. Sylvia worked with the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center as the Assistant Director of Counseling, and later as a Policy and Public Affairs Advocate. After these positions, she became the Manager for the California Freedom to Marry Coalition and worked state-wide to secure same-sex marriage rights for lesbian and gay couples. Because of her vast work for social and sexual justice, when Keith Boykin organized the National Black Justice Coalition in 2003 he asked her to serve as a board member and eventually in 2005, she accepted the position as Director of Religious Affairs, later becoming the Director of Research and Academic Initiatives.

After working on the documentary "All God's Children," Sylvia immersed herself in Religious Studies and is an expert on the "ex-gay" movement, which she calls the "cult of the annihilation of the authentic self." She credits joining and being an active participant in Yvette Flunder's City of Refuge Church with increasing her faith perspective. Over the years she had lots of experience merging her understanding of faith and political activism as she has also worked for the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Rights and served as a former Director of Equal Partners in Faith.

As a lifelong learner, Sylvia continues her pursuit of knowledge through the task of researching and writing. She finds joy in rescuing and taking care of animals, her filmmaking, and putting together words that really connect. Her goal is to use every ounce of talent in doing "things, activities, writing, producing films, whatever, to help people feel more connected to being a human being." Sylvia worked as the Executive Assistant to Bishop Yvette Flunder in Oakland, California from 2013 to 2021 and as the Faith, Education and Outreach Coordinator for SisterReach in Memphis, Tennessee since 2021.

## **Scope and Content**

In this oral history Dr. Sylvia Rhue, a writer, activist, filmmaker, and producer, discusses co-producing the film "All God's Children." She was the first African American to receive a Doctorate in Human Sexuality, and is an expert on the "ex-gay" movement. Serving in multiple roles in Black and gay organizations, she has fought for marriage equality and reproductive rights.

This interview was conducted by Dr. Monique Moultrie, 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/sylvia-rhue>.

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### **Languages**

Collection material is in English

### **Cite as**

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### **Tags**

Flunder, Yvette  
Black  
Conversion Therapy  
Marriage Equality  
Racism  
Rhue, Sylvia  
Artist/musician/poet