



Mrs. Vickie Jenkins Shaw
Black Doll Collector

I began collecting African-American dolls in the 1980's. The dolls I received for Christmas as a child, didn't resemble me and they ended up on the floor with their eyes punched out. My mom got the message when I was around four years old and she purchased me a large brown teddy bear that I pulled, drug, and boxed all over the kitchen and under the table at 740 Napier Court in Nashville. I would read and fall asleep on the bear, which was too big for me to pick up. There is no memory of any friends, just me, the bear and a little red telephone made of plastic that I talked on daily, using the language I heard my mama use. She was articulate, playful and a great conversationalist.

I liked books, marbles, music and football, until my little brother, Harold, Jr. was born. He and the birth of three sisters became my primary interest. I helped my mother raise my younger siblings so she could work to care for our family. My first job at sixteen allowed me the opportunity to purchase things for my siblings that lit up their faces. It wasn't until a few years later that I started collecting dolls.

My first Barbie doll was purchased simply because she was Black and beautiful and wore a red dress. She was my Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. doll and the "I'm Every Woman, Breaking New Ground Diva!" D- Divinely, I- Inspired, V- Victoriously, A- Anointed Woman.

Some people collect Black dolls for the love of African-American culture that is deeply rooted in their historical experience. Others, because it allows them the opportunity to reconnect with dolls of their youth, or to purchase dolls they were unable to purchase earlier (unavailable in stores).

Many of my dolls were gifts from family and friends. My husband, Albert has been great about presenting me with Limited Editions for Christmas. I was gifted with a Roaring Twenties "Collector's Choice" Limited Edition doll by a friend, Mr. Paul Keese. "In The Limelight" Limited Edition designed by African American designer Byron Lars is also in my collection. Lars designed for Mattel before starting his own label in 1991. First Lady, Michelle Obama and

movie stars like Kim Kardashian have worn his designs. Other types of Black dolls in my collection are the Williams Sisters American Champion – Serena and Venus and the Black male Action Figure “Sun-Man” (AKA Rulers of the Sun). Sun-Man was invented by Yla Eason, an African American mother, and formerly, a New York Times reporter who started a company to manufacture these dolls so that her son and others like him would have role models that looked like them.

Tennessee State University is my alma mater where I received two degrees. TSU is a school way down in Tennessee, so-ooo nice, I did it twice. I served in the military reserves, worked in a Women’s Prison, helped found and served as the first site manager for Nashville Habitat for Humanity, wrote articles for the Nashville Pride newspaper for ten years and received an award from John Seigenthaler, former Tennessean Editor, for writing thought provoking letters to the editor. I’m credited for giving the first dollar to TSU Foundation and the youngest and only student board member during the administration of the third president of TSU, Dr. Andrew Torrence. I was also a member of the “Friends of the Library” Club for TSU’s library.

Albert and I are the parents of two children, David (Joi), an executive chef, a producer and actor and Sa Cara, a physician. My favorite moments are when David comes for Thursday’s breakfast and Sa Cara comes for dinner prior to going to choir practice. I am Chairman of the Beautification Ministry at First Baptist, East Nashville.

Albert and I lease our four bedroom home after an empty nest and moved to an upscale apartment in Germantown, Nashville where we are living out our dreams – a salt water pool, exercise room, and coffee in the Keurig.

Funny moments for me are watching the young upwardly mobile darlings, with strings hanging from their ears, an Ipad2 in one hand and texting on their smart phones. What do I have in my hand? -- A cup of cinnamon basil green tea and an un-encumbered and free hand to pick up my newspaper. Living life like it’s golden as retired people and lending help to others where we can. Displaying my African American doll collection at the Avon Williams Library has been a delight. My dolls will bring joy, as they do when I look at them.

Employment History

- Site Manager, Nashville Habitat for Humanity
- Associate Director and Lead Investigator, Metro. Nashville Human Relations Commission
- Tennessee Army National Guard and Metro Public Schools

Education

- Masters, Education, Tennessee State University
- B.S. History and Political Science, Tennessee State University