



REVISIONING THE REVOLUTION

Mable Haddock
Public Media, 35 years

This transcript is excerpted from a conversation between BlackFemaleProject Founder, Precious J. Stroud, and Mable Haddock. The conversation took place late August, 2015, during the final year of the Obama Presidency, just prior to the beginning of the Trump regime; this adds a bit of context to commentary about the state of race/racialized conversations in the U.S. We join them just before the formal start of the interview, when Mable wanted to hear from Precious about her journey and the initiation of BlackFemaleProject.

Haddock: So, what about you? Tell me about you?

Stroud: You want to know about me related to the Project? Like how this came to be?

Haddock: I don't think you could separate who you become from who or what you became, were, are.

Stroud: I am a Bay Area native. When we were growing up in the '70s and early '80s, my parents had just come off that cusp of... you know, Black Pride. Radical. I mean, we were *in* it. My mom was at San Francisco State and my father went to San Jose State and then to Stanford, and did the whole Panther thing... So, we were children of hippies or radicals. So what does that make me?

In 2013, I get a job, a director position in a nonprofit. You know, a block from U.C. Berkeley. It's my hometown and I walk to work. Literally blocks from where I was born. I'm the first Black director in this nonprofit. It was started with 26 million dollars. What in the world is going on? They don't know what to do with me and I certainly didn't know what to do with them. Because I expected it to be safe. I came from a female-run, education-based nonprofit that was very female-friendly. I didn't realize how impactful that was...I was not prepared; I was extremely violated. I started having migraine headaches, and lost my vision one day as a result of the headaches. It was just completely blurry and the nurse on staff said, "You need to go."

They kept telling me I couldn't write. And, I mean, I may not be a novelist, but my whole career has been—

Haddock: So many people tell me that they've had that. That they were working at United Way or Red Cross or whatever and they started working with me, and I also said, "You can't write." But I said, "We are gonna learn how to write together." And, "This is the kind of writing we like to do here." And people can do it very quickly. But, many times, "You can't write," is said to really just damage your psyche.

Stroud: Those strategies are effective. That's what I hope will come out of



I would say, “I’m not gonna have you crying. I’m gonna ask that you wipe your face, go take a break, come back, and we’ll continue the conversation. But I am not going to be the big Black mother. I’m not gonna be that for you or for anybody.” That was my tactic. That was my way of—

Stroud: Let me take my notes!

Haddock: I’m not going to be that. I’m not going to be the nanny; I’m not going to be a comforter.

Stroud: They wanted me to be angry. They kept pushing. They wanted all of that... *Take care of everybody. You’re so good at talking. You know, you’re so good. Maybe you should work in Diversity.*

Haddock: That’s right, cause you can’t do anything else.

So, what’s led you here?

Stroud: I resolved that someone needs to document what we’re going through. Because the past generation, there wasn’t documentation. That first wave of female executives in the ‘80s— it was, you know, a breakthrough for all women. And women of color, too! We’re still only talking about two, maybe three, maybe five CEOs. So now, people have this illusion of kind-of inclusion and what does that mean for us? We need to just work harder because Oprah made it and so can I? If we could be honest about the barriers that are in place, then we could [make it]. But if you’re not gonna have the conversation, I need to make sure my sisters, my nieces, my daughters, and granddaughters know the truth so that they can maximize their experience. They should get paid well. They shouldn’t have to settle for what you feel like they

are worth. Or, you know, create our own. As you’ve modeled... So that’s where it came from.

Haddock: Great. Thank you for the story. I sometimes forget how fortunate I’ve been.

Stroud: Tell me about that.

Haddock: Well I think that... Just being able to choose who I want to be, what I want to do. And making that happen. And when I listen to stories of the Black women who’ve worked in nonprofit as well as corporate spaces, and hear the stories about how their talents have been misused or not used or abused, I just realize, you know, my obstacles were different. I had plenty of obstacles to work with and against to overcome. But they were different. They were obstacles, I think, of my own choosing and that makes all the difference in the world. When you are working or you feel like you’re working for yourself, you feel like you’re working to a goal that’s larger than yourself.

I was raised in Virginia on a farm. A tobacco farm. And my father... used to work day and night, which meant we were day and night with him. And he would say, “You know, it’s a pleasure for me to work, because I’m working on my own farm. When I grew up, I worked for other people and I resent that I got paid a dollar a day or, you know, fifty cents a day, and ate at the back door and on the back porch. Now, I would gladly do that and more because I am working for myself and it makes such a difference in how you approach your work, how you approach your day, how you approach your life.”

Even if you are not making a lot of money. Just... the freedom you have to make decisions about the

this process and research. That young women will be able to say, “Oh, no no no, I read about this. What you are trying to do is make me question myself so that you can have the upper hand.” And maybe it’s strategic. But the way it was built into the culture and established and maintained by elder women in this space—the sexism—that was very disturbing. So the women maintained the system that oppressed them, even though they’d come into my office, close the door, and cry, “The men don’t understand.” I’m like, You are approaching retirement. Why are you crying in my office?

Haddock: Privileged.

Stroud: Yes, very. And crying all the time.

Haddock: If they were crying all the time, I just wouldn’t have it...

future of, you know, our future, and documenting and preserving our future. To me, it's meant everything. It's been everything.

Stroud: Can you tell me a little bit more about what your industry is and how many years you've been in the industry?

“I DON'T THINK YOU COULD SEPARATE WHO YOU BECOME FROM WHO OR WHAT YOU BECAME, WERE, ARE.”

Haddock: Well, it's really public media. Black public media. I started the National Black Programming Consortium. I'm the founding Director. I can't take credit as the founder; I'm the founding director. I'm the first director of the organization and I shaped it with 25 years of hard work...motivation and persistence; I shaped it to what it is today. Be it good, be it bad, be it indifferent. What it is is mostly a result of what I wanted it to be and thought it should be.

I started in 1980... I think I was 33 years old and I had no idea what I was doing. In fact...when I came in—the board was trying to hire someone, and I said, “I don't want to be a director of anything. That's not what I do.” I had been working in community arts programming and education outreach and that sort of thing...I saw this as an opportunity for me to take that a notch up, but to do it in the program arena. I wanted to watch films and analyze films and critique films and decide which ones will be funded, and which ones we can get on the national schedule, and which ones are gonna be representative of

the kind of ideas and the kind of values we want to promote and I wanted to be at the head of that.

The board, being smart as they are, said, “Okay, why don't you just... If we don't get a director in here in the next couple of weeks, we are going to lose the grant, so if you would just take this, and then we'll, you know, kinda begin it and we'll consider that proposal.” 20 years later, I was still doing it. 25 years later I was still doing it. Because every day is a challenge; every day is, “I can do that better. You know, I could have done that better. I know I can make this happen if I just do it this way, if I just partner with these...” So every day was an opportunity to do something new, to make something happen. So you stay and you stay and you try to do that and you look up, it's 25 years later, and you're like, “Did I really do anything? Did I really make a difference?” I don't know.


Stroud: What was your vision? You said your vision you shaped.

Haddock: My vision and my idea was always to share the achievements and contributions and beauty and talent and artistry of Black people with the world. To change the images, to help to change the images that have been perpetuated about Black people through mass media. By omission; by downright, you know, lies; by historical inaccuracies. All of the above. To try to bring another vision about our contributions to the world. That was my vision. And to do it through film and television. And to do it as honestly and with as much integrity as I possibly could.

Stroud: Well, there is something to look at 25 years later, thanks to you. That says a lot about the impact

of your contribution and that the work continues. You laid the foundation and did the work for many years. What was your path like from Virginia to ending up in New York City or D.C.?

Haddock: I ended up through the migratory trail that most of us end up. There is one for everyone. To give it some context these days, I talk about The Henrietta Lacks Project, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, who was a Black woman from that small town of Clover, Virginia, where I was born and raised. Her migratory pattern—she went from that place to Baltimore where, at Johns Hopkins, she was discovered to have the kind of cells that reproduced and helped build a multi-trillion dollar pharmaceutical industry and her family never got a dime for it. The wonderful book called *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*—I would advise you [to read it], if you haven't read it. And Oprah is supposed to be doing a film about it. I followed that path, but I moved past Baltimore to New York, where I had a friend from high school who lived in Mt. Vernon, New York.



So I came to Mt. Vernon. My first job—actually my first “real” job in New York—was working at the phone company as a telephone operator, a 411 operator. I liked it. You know, I had fun. But, I knew it wasn’t forever for me. I mean, they wanted me to be in management, but it wasn’t a forever job for me, and I wasn’t the type that, you know, meet people at the door and you’re one minute late and they want...I just...I couldn’t see myself doing that. Of course, my parents were disappointed that I couldn’t see myself doing that or being a teacher.

You know, [my parents] never really got what I was doing. But having grown up in such isolation in the country, on a farm, with a family who worked very very hard and we were very poor, but we read a lot. My father was a deacon and active in the community, and my mother read a lot and she was a housekeeper and my father’s support. So they set a really, really good example and I escaped through books. At the time there were books by Alice

Walker and Toni Morrison and you know, all of the major Black writers that I’ve read...Iceberg Slim series... all of the novels and books. I just read anything I could get my hands on and I dreamed through those books. I dreamed about who I could be and what I could be and what could happen. I dreamed about the stories being translated visually cause Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, their stories are so beautifully vivid, and so I thought I wanted to write about those things initially. But I was afraid to do that ‘cause you expose yourself, so I didn’t want to expose myself too much. So I kinda came in through the back door. When the opportunity came, I was working at one of the colleges doing college education outreach and teaching English to young incoming students in this higher education opportunity program. From there, I went to Kent State University and studied telecommunications and got an NBC internship while I was there in Cleveland and I wrote for the consumer affairs division of the news, which was great. I was doing my little investigative research and stuff like that. Then I went to work for the Canton Center for the Arts. I helped to set up an urban arts program to bring diversity into the museum. I brought in groups like the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company and different high-caliber Black arts and set up programs for youth and tried to integrate the arts and education curriculum. I was doing this work when a friend of mine told me about this opportunity: a group of public television local programmers had won a \$180,000 grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to bring diversity through Black programming to PBS, and they needed a Director and Programmer. I applied for the Programmer position and ended up with the Director position “just until they found someone more qualified.” I was there for 25 years.

“I JUST READ ANYTHING I COULD GET MY HANDS ON AND I DREAMED THROUGH THOSE BOOKS. I DREAMED ABOUT WHO I COULD BE AND WHAT I COULD BE AND WHAT COULD HAPPEN. I DREAMED ABOUT THE STORIES BEING TRANSLATED VISUALLY CAUSE TONI MORRISON AND ALICE WALKER, THEIR STORIES ARE SO BEAUTIFULLY VIVID, AND SO I THOUGHT I WANTED TO WRITE ABOUT THOSE THINGS INITIALLY. BUT I WAS AFRAID TO DO THAT ‘CAUSE YOU EXPOSE YOURSELF, SO I DIDN’T WANT TO EXPOSE MYSELF TOO MUCH. SO I KINDA CAME IN THROUGH THE BACK DOOR.”

But yeah, along the way the adventures have been just too too many to name, and that’s one of the reasons why now I’m at Columbia. I was just at Columbia this morning. I was recently awarded a Columbia community fellowship to work on a project that I’ve been thinking about. I am one of four people who won the research fellowship.

Stroud: Congratulations.

Haddock: Thank you. I'm working on writing or documenting the contributions of the pioneering Black filmmakers of the civil rights movement. The first class of Blacks to go to college and to film school. Those who would ordinarily be teachers and lawyers and doctors and ministers who are now filmmakers and artists and their parents are saying, "Oh, why why why? Oh god, not my money for this!" And those people who had this dream and this vision were the artists and activists and the mouths and the people who documented what was happening. Many not having training as filmmakers, others having training, some coming through PBS on the heels of the Civil Rights Act and buoyed by the 1968 Carnegie Commission Report which made an urgent case for diversifying television to stem the tide of protest in Black communities. This was the first wave of young Black people, of the LA Rebellion, the NY protest, getting their legs and education and going out and making images and making films and documenting the times that they were in. And those are some of the only living documents we have of that period. And these people were so important to the development of a Black film aesthetic, development of a... Black documentary aesthetic. The sacrifices that they made! They could have been teachers with pensions. But they chose to document our history, and it's costly in terms of the money it requires. It's costly in terms of the time it requires. It's costly in terms of the sacrifices they had to make in, you know, family versus... film making. Money going to film versus going to maybe purchasing a house. Those people were those pioneers. They were the first ones. I want to look at what they did. How they did it. How the lack of resources translated into tremendous creativity and different creative kinds of genres and content and forms that other people

eventually copied, that people now study; but I want them to study and understand the genesis of it, where it came from, and how it came about.

Looking at Ellis Haizlip who, you know, had one of the first PBS talk shows, every week, he would come on the air with an artist or activist from the Black community who was little-known to a broad audience, and expose the world to what was happening in the streets. He demonstrated how TV can help shape and confirm culture. It was the beginning of talk show as we now know it. But his was, "I'm bringing everybody from the community and they gonna drum and they are going to poet and they are going to style and they are gonna profile and the last poet gonna cuss everybody out." It was television as television had never been seen before and I think we may have taken it for granted. I am so fortunate, so lucky to have been part of a time when we felt like we could do anything. We felt like if we could dream; we could make it happen. I don't know if I see that happening today.

I'm not talking about sexism, racism...You wanted—

Stroud: This is so relevant. I overheard some women talking last weekend. I was waiting for a table as I explored all that Harlem has to offer. They were just thirty. I know because they kept saying it over and over: "I thought I'd be further along by now. I have this law degree; why am I being paid this? My husband can't get a job." The friend continued, "You know, when we started college, they said that the market was going down, and we were so optimistic that it would come back, but we were wrong." I was put off by the narrative that they've now embodied. They believe it, that somehow they are limited, and that the economy is the reason...

Apathetically, they've adopted it as their reality. It's part of their narrative; it'll be part of their story. I was a little shocked to hear it. And then they went on about their mothers' comments about, "You don't..." "You are too..." "The reason you are not married is because you went to school," etc.

Haddock: Oh, I don't believe that! Even though we'd get killed in the streets and everything else, we were getting up and fighting back. It was like, okay, they knock us down? We getting up and fighting back. So we had the fighting back mentality, you know, and we could do it; we thought we could change the world. After all, there were examples all around us.

Stroud: You did.

Haddock: Yeah, and that's why these filmmakers decided, "I won't teach. I'm not going to teach in the traditional sense. I know that that's what you want me to do, but I'm going to do something else.



I'm going to tell the world who we are. And I'm gonna do it with this camera that I have here. This is my revolutionary statement." And so, you know, that belief I think is the thing that guided us. And the thing that really maintained us.

Stroud: Which belief?

Haddock: That we could do anything. That we could be anything.

Precious: I'm sure if you were at that place in life, you would have never thought that, a generation and a half or so forward, that mentality would not still be in existence, like the women that I described feeling like they can't move past the economic conditions to prosper.

Haddock: We had a school, if you will, for the production of [Soul with Ellis Haizlip](#). I do consulting now and I work with producers and help them set up schools and coursework to look at the range

of issues around media. In a specific case, our topic was public television and Ellis Haizlip. We focused on Ellis the man, his work—it was all of that.

We'd invite different people in, and it was a small group, because it had to be—mostly the crew and people who knew Ellis and the work—and we'd have these panels and these talks and we'd document it, to give the producers and directors a clearer sense of the story and all the pieces...We showed clips of the work from Ellis' show. The young people who were there said, "I didn't know you could say that on television. I didn't know that. Oh my god. Are they saying that?" Because now, everything is so stilted and suppressed and censored that they are shocked that people could get on and say whatever they were saying..."nigga this" and "whitey that" and... That was the time. And even I forget and I was in it! That was the time and we thought it would last forever.

Our work has changed so dramatically. And that's good and that's bad. It has changed in many ways in that it is tailored to fit within a system. It's good in that it's easier to get it marketed; it's easier to wrap it around with the other themes that are the flavor of the day, but... it's bad in that there is less space for difference; there's less space for rawness; there's no space for pain and hollering. There's limited space for learning and making mistakes and falling down and getting up and, you know, reshaping and refining and remodeling and redoing. You have to come out the gates clean and fresh and finished and that can tend to produce a more conventional approach to the work. So I can see how if you work in a corporation, and you're a Black person in a corporation, and you're molded into these pieces, and you gladly go and lose yourself in those spaces

and say, "Okay, that's the price I pay. I'm a smarty, went to a good school, but the deal is [if I'm giving up this much of myself along the way], I'm gonna keep my hair. Keep something."

Stroud: In college or your first job, was there a lesson that you learned about race that prepared you for the workplace or career?

“MY VISION AND MY IDEA WAS ALWAYS TO SHARE THE ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS AND BEAUTY AND TALENT AND ARTISTRY OF BLACK PEOPLE WITH THE WORLD. TO CHANGE THE IMAGES, TO HELP TO CHANGE THE IMAGES THAT HAVE BEEN PERPETUATED ABOUT BLACK PEOPLE THROUGH MASS MEDIA. BY OMISSION; BY DOWNRIGHT, YOU KNOW, LIES; BY HISTORICAL INACCURACIES. ALL OF THE ABOVE. TO TRY TO BRING ANOTHER VISION ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WORLD. THAT WAS MY VISION. AND TO DO IT THROUGH FILM AND TELEVISION. AND TO DO IT AS HONESTLY AND WITH AS MUCH INTEGRITY AS I POSSIBLY COULD.”

Haddock: I guess everybody did at the time. But, I grew up in segregated America in Virginia in the '50s and '60s. Schools were not integrated. Nothing was integrated. So everything I learned was about race. Every minute of every day was about race. I was at a Black high school. We had a bus with all of us Black only on the bus. We had inferior books and we had supposedly inferior education. I never went to a library until I came to New York cause we weren't allowed in those [public] facilities.

One of the things that I learned was that Black people can be as race prejudiced as white people. And that, in the community that I was in, it was about class. The larger society was absolutely racist. But I wasn't in that society. I was in this little society, this little microcosm, if you will. And what I saw amongst Black people was very revealing. I don't think we talk enough about that. About how we treat each other as well as how we are treated by the larger society and how we allow skin color, societal positioning, and cultural differences to shape how we treat each other.

I was bright because I read a lot. And I was considered smart. I was in the homeroom of the top students, of I guess 25. Most of the parents of those kids were teachers and social workers and doctors and dentists and lawyers and my father was a farmer. So I was not a part of that society, but I was part of that homeroom because, you know, my grades were there. And I remember one day these white people came to the school and one of the principals came in and said, anybody want to take this test? And I think I was in math class and I was always trying to get under the table in math class and hope that I could just be invisible forever because if you called me I was an embarrassment.

So, I'm sure I raised my hand and said whatever it is I want to go and I want to do it.

I went and I took a test. It was the [Betty Crocker Homemakers of Tomorrow](#) scholarship test, which is so funny because someone who worked in Bill Clinton or Obama's office said to me—I met them somewhere and we were laughing because they also won this thing in high school. And it was like, we gonna put together a club of the alumni!

So I made the highest score in the high school, but you had to be going to college in order to get it. These Black teachers who were part of that little glitterati group came [to me] and they said, "Well, you're not going to college and this other girl is, so, you won't mind if we just give it to her." Well, I wasn't registered in a college. I wasn't going to college. My parents couldn't afford to send me to college. So I said, "Okay."

It was kept very quiet that I actually scored higher than the other girl who received the scholarship. They didn't say she was in first place, but she got the scholarship. I saw her later in Ebony magazine, as one of the top in her industry in the corporate world.

Stroud: Her people took care of her.

Haddock: Yes. In that instance, yes.

Stroud: And you, as a young person, were alienated.

Haddock: Yes. And I'm talking about how we don't support each other. [The teachers] knew I didn't have any of that kind of support. But they didn't rally around me; instead, they took it from me.

So, it's Black people also in terms of race prejudice. On the other hand, the way I got to where I am is because of Black people in the industry who supported me and who made sure I had what I needed in order to get where I am going. So, I'm not indicting an entire race, but just saying...

There were white women and Black women and Black men and white men, too, who helped me in different ways...They weren't officially called mentors, I guess, but certainly, yes, they opened so many doors for me. I had people help me every step of the way—Black people. And when I got [to National Black Programming Consortium] and I needed a mentor, it was hard for me to really find a mentor that could help lead me through. Also, the Blacks who were inside the system at that time were really interested in maintaining that insidersness. And I was kind of outside. I didn't want to be inside, but I wanted to have access to the people inside, because I am fairly of the



opinion that we have to do work on all levels, [inside and outside of systems]. Some people don't want to be inside, but they want to be able to access the people inside. We ought to be able to do that.

Stroud: Can you tell me why that was important for your industry in particular?

Haddock: Why having access to the inside was important? Because I had to get people's work inside—that crazy [Black revolutionary] work, you know, and even what we would consider ordinary, regular Black work was considered revolutionary because of the fact that it's Black—then it's revolutionary. Getting that work on the inside—I mean, people do the work because it's important and because it's a creative endeavor, but they also want it to be seen and have impact. So I had to have gatekeepers inside trust me. I had to have gatekeepers help me through the door. If you're a gatekeeper and you're in this, make a way for me. Let me know what the deal is so I can go in there.

Stroud: How were you able to do that? To build those relationships?

Haddock: By being non-judgmental about the insiders, I think. For example, if you were a Black Republican insider, that's okay with me. If you were a Black Democrat insider, you know, whatever... It's okay. I would invite you to my Board of Directors, or on my committee, to speak on my panel, to get you with me, because I'm trying to get you to help me do this. So I'm not judging you. The only time I'm judging you is when you are blocking me.

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Stroud: Let me ask you a clarifying question. I want to take one step back. As if I were a sixteen-year-old. I'm trying to get to how did you know that you needed [insiders] and then you had to figure out how to get through to them, for your own advantage, realizing that you were not junior in your career at the time, that you had years of background and years of experience. But if you are telling a sixteen-year-old how important it is to cultivate those relationships, what's step one?

Haddock: I think it's intuitive.

Stroud: I wonder if we can articulate it.

Haddock: Yes, I think we should. I grew up in a church and my father was the head deacon in the church, and I was a secretary of the Sunday school when I was 12. I learned and gained an understanding of how to work with people. With my father and I in Sunday school, he addressed me as Ms. Staten (my maiden name) and...when he needed to put me in check, he did it very non-judgmentally and very non-child-to-parent, but professional-to-professional. And he addressed it before the entire congregation to me.

Through my experiences growing up, that's how I learned to understand that everybody has something to give. It's up to you to figure out how to get it.

Stroud: So how can you describe this in a different way for a young person to understand who may not have your similar experiences of having a lot of responsibility early in life and good examples of what service to community looks like?

Haddock: We as Black people get so emotional and I am the most emotional person you will probably ever meet. But I know how to maintain, I try to separate these pieces. And I think our problem is that one of our major issues as young ladies and Black females is that we personalize so much, that we forget that it is not about us personally. For instance, when I was at NBPC and we were licensing projects—we called it granting then—from \$50,000 to \$100,000 to filmmakers to help them get their project going. That is not a pittance; some people can do the entire project with that. There was a lot of competition for money; there was a lot of

competition for my attention. We could only fund five to seven projects. When we said no to some Black filmmakers—particularly those who had a little bit of cache or experience, but their project maybe wasn't ready, wasn't refined; it needed reshaping and workshopping; it needed more work—their reaction was unfortunately to attack me and my degree of Blackness, my fairness, my judgment, my integrity, even.

But the most difficult thing for me was that many times, if it was a white person [whose work was not funded], they would be at my desk or on the phone wanting to know, "Can you talk to me about how I can make this better? Can you talk to me about what the problems were? Can you talk to me about what you are looking for that I need to include in my proposal? Can you relook at my proposal? How can I reshape this?" While some of my Black rejectees (for lack of a better word) would say, "I'll never ever submit anything to you again. I will never ever work with you. You ain't s--t." And my question is, why would you give up on yourself? Why would you not fight for what you believe in and what you want?

Why would you personalize this to the point that you hurt yourself? And that's what I think I would say to young women: This is not personal; this is work and if you have a passion about your work, about anything you are trying to do. You will go to whoever and do whatever you need to do to get it done. They may not like the way you wear your hair. That's their problem. It's not your problem. You get what you need. You know, I'm talking this and I just want to say, for the record I guess, that I lost NBPC; they took NBPC away from me, you know.

Stroud: Who is they?

Haddock: The major funder and distributor for the organization that I led. For three to four years I had nothing. No money, no support, few friends in the field. And I had to fight to get that back so I'm not just talking out the side of my mouth.

Stroud: What was their impetus for cutting funding?


Haddock: It was basically a political decision, I think. On the heels of the Reagan Revolution, basically the Democrats were out, the Republicans were in. Two Black Republicans were assigned to oversee the Consortium and their program vision and values conflicted with mine. To be simplistic, Billy Woodberry's *Bless Their Little Hearts*, Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust*, and I would dare say Marlon Riggs' *Tongues Untied* was not necessarily the way they envisioned Black people represented on public television. They, I think, thought all Black programming should look like *Eyes on the Prize*, which is critically important but by no means represents the entire aesthetic or lived experience of Black people. So, a difference again in what our values are around how we represent ourselves. Some people think it's really important to represent ourselves as they would like others to see us. And some people think it's really important to represent the broad spectrum of who we are. I guess you could tell from this conversation that it keeps coming back around to that kind of differences in values in Black representation. Ultimately we are all dependent on resources outside of ourselves; it's how we choose to interact with these outside influences that determines how we express ourselves to the world.

Stroud: So let me ask you, because the first words you chose were, "They took it away from me." In that moment and or time right after that happened, what did you feel?

Haddock: A wreck. A failure. So much anger. So much pain. So much betrayal. So much...just hurt. Just hurt. But never giving up. Never. In fact, I became a meaner old person; and I would go to the conferences and I would make everybody so uncomfortable and I would just be there and I'd be looking bad. People would run away from me. Or they would come toward me if they were brave. But most were not; most people are not brave. I was holding people honest and accountable by being present.

Stroud: What were some of the key points going through or coming through that? What were maybe two or three things that you had to have, or that you leaned on?

Haddock: I think for anyone—not just me, anyone; you asked me personally, but I'm making it a little broader I guess—understanding who you are, culturally, religiously, whatever it is. Those things get you through anything. Anything. If you don't have it, you will go with



whatever and you will just scatter yourself so much that you'll end up where the wind takes you. So I think, during that period, certainly, that reliance, that knowing that you can beat me, but you can't keep me down. And I will be back and I'm coming back because this is not personal; this is a fight for something... You believe in your way and I believe in mine, but I believe mine will win. And I'm coming back, and I'll find a way to come back, and I did. And it was some tough competition and some maneuvering.

So, what did I rely on? I relied on those values of family and hard work... Integrity. Making myself and others around me accountable. Feeling responsible for the people I was supposed to represent and feeling I had failed them and I had to find a way to redeem myself and the organization. That got me through. People gave me odd jobs, random contracts, teaching and lecturing, programming and curating and I was willing to do whatever I needed to do. When

we couldn't pay our rent, I offered the owner of the building to do the janitor work until we got back on our feet. You know? The ability to put pride aside to do what you need to do for the greater good. And knowing it won't last always, you can do whatever you need to to get to the next step. You know what I'm saying? It may sound like some kind of sad sacrificial lamb stuff, but for me, it was what I knew to do. I put pride aside and I did what I had to do cause I knew I was coming back. And the world was going to know that I was coming back. So, that got me through. That knowing.

The other thing that got me through at the end, when they came in to, like, get ready to... cut me off and to, you know, transfer the Consortium to another organization—in this case, the couple it went to lost it back to me after three years due to lack of programming. As we were getting our files and accounts ready to pass over, in comes the brother who's the head of the audit or accounting at CPB and who in his quiet and competent way, made sure that my books and accounting were in compliance, so that we could exit with a clean record. Always happens when you do the right thing. Always. I don't want to sound like I'm lecturing; I just did, didn't I?

Stroud: Well, that's what this is all about. It's about your story, your journey, because we benefit from what you've experienced and learned. Is there anything that you would change?

Haddock: Of course. I would ask for help more and rely on others more, and fear less. I would have been a better listener and a better team player and I would probably have figured out a better way to retire financially. But I couldn't have laughed more,

given more, or been prouder of the work we helped produce and the people I worked with along the way.

Stroud: You have given a lot. Thank you so much. Any final words of wisdom?

Haddock: My parents used to say, "Keep on living, baby. You don't know what you shall be." I live each day in anticipation and joy of the known and unknown.



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ABOUT MABLE HADDOCK

Mable Haddock has spent the past four decades advocating for and supporting social issue media and media makers of color. In her role as Founding Director of The National Black Programming Consortium (NBPC, 1980-2005), Ms. Haddock was instrumental in developing and producing several award winning programs for the public television schedule including *Matters Of Race*, *Unnatural Causes*, *Mandela*, *The Fannie Lou Hammer Story*, *The State Of Black America, I and II*. Through the NBPC RFP and Discretionary fund, Ms. Haddock provided development and production funding to hundreds of producers whose work subsequently aired on PBS. After retiring from NBPC in 2005 after 25 years, Ms. Haddock helped to develop and implement the Firelight Producers Lab from 2008-2013. The Lab provides professional development, mentoring, and support to help producers of color complete their documentaries. During her tenure over 30 producers benefitted from the Lab support, seminars, documentaries, and conferences.

Ms. Haddock has served on the board of the Columbus Cable Advisory Board, the Pittsburgh and Columbus Public Access Boards, the PBS Programming Board, the CPB Multi-cultural advisory board, and the Ohio Arts Council multicultural advisory board. She has served as a panelist/reader for ITVS, POV, NEH, NEA, The Ohio Arts Council (three-year appointment), The Jerome Foundation (three-year appointment) and is an emeritus board member of NBPC. She has written and lectured nationally and internationally on the aesthetics, politics and role of Black film. Awards include The Founders Awards from the Black Women's Preservation Project, three CEBA Awards, the Leo Award from the Flaherty International Film Seminars, a New York Women in Film Award, Women of Achievement Award from the Columbus YWCA, a Trailblazer Award from Blackfilm.com, and a leadership award from NAMAC. She is a previous Columbia University Revson Fellow and a current Columbia University Community Scholar where she is researching and writing on Black independent media for social change.