

## DAPHNE MAXWELL REID Biography

You wouldn't blame someone with a lifetime of success as a performer to take it easy in their later years, restricting their efforts to the occasional fun gig or reunion appearance. But that's not Daphne Maxwell Reid, who continues to thrive as a creative entrepreneur and artist, continuing to dazzle anyone who knows her with her bold spirit, grace, and work ethic. The first African American woman to make the cover of *Glamour* magazine and one of television history's most beloved sitcom moms, Reid now balances her acting gigs with her work as a photographic artist, clothing designer, and education activist, demonstrating that it's never too late to pursue new passions and find new opportunities.

When she attended Northwestern University a half-century ago, Daphne Maxwell became the prestigious school's first African-American homecoming queen; but that was just the first of many barriers that Maxwell broke in her career, arriving into the industry at just the right moment as a new perspective on race was emerging in the wake of the civil rights movement. "Being among the first of a few black women to work in popular television reminds me that one doesn't choose to be a pioneer," she says today. "One does what comes next in their journey, and sometimes you happen to be the first to do it. I just happened to land in that slot of being first for some things – but being the first doesn't mean anything if it doesn't seed the growth of a lot more. I'm pleased that my seed bore fruit, and now there are so many more black homecoming queens and cover models and actresses in popular entertainment."

Reid's creative journey began as a child in Manhattan. "I grew up knowing that I could be anything I wanted to be, but I also learned the joy and responsibility of working." Her father had studied photography, and passed on his love of the medium to young Daphne, who had her first Brownie camera before the age of ten. "We always had cameras in the house," she remembers, and her father's passion for the photographic image is something that she would carry with her throughout her life.

But first, she worked as a model, parlaying her success in that field into an acting career that found her on dozens of television series in the 1980s. With guest starring roles in shows like "WKRP in Cincinnati" (where she first worked on television with her husband, Tim Reid, to whom she has been married since 1982), "Hill Street Blues," and "Simon and Simon," she first took a lead role on the acclaimed series "Frank's Place," opposite Tim. But it was in the role of Vivian Banks in the last three seasons of "The Fresh Prince of Bel Air" with Will Smith that endeared Reid to a new generation of fans. "I'm honored that I was able to be one of those pioneers of 80s television, and maintain my integrity and play a wide variety of roles," she says today. "If I am considered a role model, I would like those who are seeking to emulate me to make sure that they live their lives with integrity and joy."

Now residing with her husband in Virginia, Reid has turned in recent years to her lifelong passion for fashion and photography. As a young actress and model, Reid often made her own outfits and wardrobe ("I've been sewing since I was nine," she says). At a certain point, friends would say that they wished they could wear Reid's outfits, so she started making pieces for her friends. "I have to do it in limited collections, because I consider it wearable art," she explains. "I keep the price point high, with a limited collection, so I don't get overwhelmed, and I want these to be personally appreciated projects, not mass manufactured." Of particular pride are her designs for Chinese-inspired jackets that are bold, colorful, and versatile, and easily adaptable to different body sizes and types. Her line (Daphne Style) wowed audiences at New York's fashion week in 2017, and is featured on her website [daphnemaxwellreid.com](http://daphnemaxwellreid.com).

Perhaps even more notable is Reid's photographic work (featured in the "Fresh Prints" portion of her website); in particular, Reid's specialty is taking picture of interesting doors all around the world. "It was about ten years ago, in sharing some of my travel pictures with friends, that they encouraged me to make art out of them," she recalls. "I woke up on my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, and I said to myself, 'I am a photographic artist,' and I spent the last decade figuring out what that means." Discovering her affinity for doors has been part of that process. "I see the doors as a metaphor for life," she explains. "The journey of doors is something that I like to preach to young people; every choice you make leads you through a door on an adventure, on a new journey, on a learning trip." In the form of postcards, printed collections, and gallery exhibitions, Reid's vibrant, compelling prints catalog some of her journeys through Europe, Africa, and Cuba.

Ultimately, Reid's life is a testament to the power of learning – whether it was learning passion from her father, or attending university, or teaching herself new careers. It's no wonder that she extends that experience to others in the form of working with Virginia State University, one of the nation's leading HBCUs (historically black

college/universities). “I encourage the schools I work with to make sure that the education the students are receiving is of value in the current economy,” she says, “and to make sure that they learn the basics of how to think and process information, how to go to an original source – teaching people how to think is far more important than teaching them how to memorize facts.” A member of the board of VSU for eight years, Reid has hosted informational videos documenting campus life and faculty achievements, and made public appearances on behalf of the institution. “Part of my contribution was to use my celebrity to make sure we connect with alumni and increase the school’s reputation and coffers,” she adds, noting that for HBCUs, demonstrating the intellectual and vocational value of higher education to their future students is a crucial need.

Throughout her many activities and endeavors, Reid continues to be supported by her husband, himself a television pioneer as an actor, writer, director, and producer. “It’s so exciting to be married to someone who dreams as big as he does,” she beams. “I’m proud of being his spouse, and proud of the energy he gives me to follow my dreams.” That partnership and her lifelong passion for hard work and achievement is summed up by what Reid hopes her work conveys to her audience. “You always have to contribute to owning your own power. You have to be in control of your essence. You decide how it is shared, where it is shared, and how you want to be remembered by each step that you take. Having self-confidence then gives you the power to make good choices.”

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