

Karen Grace-Baker Brief Biography



KAREN GRACE-BAKER has a general management background with over 20 years of extensive management experience with leading Fortune 100 companies and entertainment studios throughout the United States. She has held key executive positions at Sony Wonder, (the children's division of Sony Music Entertainment), at the Walt Disney Company's Television division and at General Mills (The Pillsbury Company division).

She has also served in key accounting and financial positions at Digital Equipment Corporation, MCI Communications and Polaroid.

Karen holds a B.A. degree from Boston College (LCOE '77) and the MBA degree from Clark-Atlanta University. She has been invited as a guest speaker and panelist at several marketing conferences across the country and has been a guest columnist for Kid Screen magazine and Progressive Grocer. Karen was also featured in Essence magazine as one of the "Top Corporate Women in America".

In 1998, Karen decided to parlay her marketing talents into the development of her own consulting agency, Strategic Marketing Resources LLC. Her marketing consulting agency also has a subsidiary, Kid Kulture™ Marketing which has been contracted to develop marketing programs for the children's divisions of many entertainment studios in Hollywood. Her client roster includes: Universal Studios Home Video, Sony Pictures Entertainment, MGM Studios, Columbia Tri-star Television, Columbia Tri-star Interactive and Jim Henson Studios.

Most recently, Karen was the Youth Day Producer for the 2006/2007 Tavis Smiley "Road to Health" tour. This multi-city Health, Fitness and Wellness tour was developed to combat childhood obesity and to promote health, wellness and fitness among African-American and Latino consumers. This program included a Youth Day Expo, workshops and a main stage presentation featuring celebrity talent (most notably Olympic medalist Jackie Joyner Kersee and famed Johns Hopkins neurosurgeon Dr. Benjamin Carson both graced her stage show).

Karen is often called upon to conduct training workshops for small businesses and non-profit organizations and recently conducted two workshops the Center for Non-Profit Management on the subject areas of Cause Related Marketing and Strategic Planning for non profit entities.

In 2007, Karen followed her continued passion for education, pursued and received her college counseling certificate from the University of California, San Diego (2010) and started an educational consulting firm, Right College Choice™.

Karen has taken her vast experience in marketing and branding and combined that with her

knowledge of colleges and admission and has been applying her ‘marketing and branding’ techniques to develop unique strategies to help high school students ‘stand out’ in the college application by showcasing their unique qualities. As the chief educational strategist, Karen helps students and parents develop strategies during their middle and high school years to ensure that they maximize their educational and extracurricular opportunities in order to enhance their college acceptances. Rather than aiming for the ‘top colleges’ as defined by magazine lists and rankings, she assists students in narrowing down and determining the ‘right college fit’ in order to make their college choice one that they will enjoy and that will provide them with a positive college experience. Over the past few years, she has successfully helped students gain acceptances into Stanford, Carnegie Mellon, Duke, Boston University, Columbia, Harvard, Yale, Tulane, Boston College, Emory, Grinnell, Lawrence, Dartmouth, Georgetown, Tufts, Northwestern and several University of California colleges among others. Her students have also secured merit scholarships from the Ron Brown Foundation, Jackie Robinson Foundation, Google, The Executive Leadership Council, and have been selected as Presidential Scholars at George Washington, Tulane and Carnegie Mellon University and have been selected among the semifinalists and finalists for the College Board National Merit and National Achievement programs, Young Epidemiology and Coca Cola Scholars program as well as many others.

Karen’s skills and talents have also been recognized by author and actor, Hill Harper (CSI:NY) who hired Karen for his nonprofit foundation-Manifest Your Destiny (www.manifestyourdestiny.org) to help guide underserved students on the pathway to college. For the past two years, through the foundation’s Summer Empowerment Academy, Karen has conducted workshops on college readiness, test preparation and scholarship funding for both parents and students in the program and is serving as the program’s college counselor for the foundation’s Summer Empowerment Academy.

In addition, Karen has served as a consultant for the Institute for Student Excellence housed at West Los Angeles College providing workshops for several high schools in Los Angeles on college readiness, ‘finding the right college match’, standardized testing, financial aid and scholarship funding.

Karen recently joined Da Vinci Design(www.davincischools.org), a new charter school in the South Bay area of Los Angeles as the Lead College Counselor, where she graduated her first class of 122 students in 2013. Those students were accepted to over 250 different colleges across the U.S. including highly selective Ivy League universities, University of California and California State universities and several flagship public and private colleges across the country.

An active member in the community, she recently served on the parent board at the Marlborough School in Los Angeles for the admissions committee, is a board member on the Hancock-LaBrea Homeowner’s Association and previously served on the board of the nonprofit ‘Friends of’ parent organizations for both Wonderland Avenue and Third Street elementary schools. In 2013, she was recently appointed to the Advisory Board of the UCLA Extension School of Education and on the Board of Trustees for Hollywood Schoolhouse. She is a member of the Los Angeles chapter of the Boston College Alumni club and the AHANA Advisory committee, past member of the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences and the National Black MBA Association.

Karen was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts and is proud of her Cape Verdean roots and family heritage and currently resides in Los Angeles with her husband Richard S. Baker (ophthalmologist and previous Provost and Dean of the College of Medicine at Charles Drew University) and proud mother to two daughters, Lauren (Stanford University’13) and Rachel (Yale ’17).

