

Flashback: Daphne Maxwell Reid, Aunt Vivian of 'The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air Reunion'

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on November 21, 2020 - 11:29pm

- [1968](#) [2]
- [African American](#) [3]
- [Alfonso Ribeiro](#) [4]
- [Aunt Vivian](#) [5]
- [Black](#) [6]
- [Carlton](#) [7]
- [Daphne Maxwell Reid](#) [8]
- [HBO Max](#) [9]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [10]
- [Interview](#) [11]
- [James Avery](#) [12]
- [Jazzy Jeff](#) [13]
- [Northwestern University](#) [14]
- [Patrick McDonald](#) [15]
- [Reunion](#) [16]
- [Sit-In](#) [17]
- [The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air](#) [18]
- [Tim Reid](#) [19]
- [Will Smith](#) [20]

CHICAGO – On November 18th, 2020, the streaming service HBO Max premiered “The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air Reunion.” 30 years after the popular sitcom debuted, the primary cast got together to talk about the joys and foibles of developing family ties while creating and performing their characters in the show. Among the reunited cast was Will Smith (Will), Alfonso Riberiro (Carlton), Tatyana Ali (Ashley), Karyn Parsons (Hilary), Jazz (DJ Jazzy Jeff) along with the actress who portrayed Aunt Vivian, Daphne Maxwell Reid.

Reid was the second Aunt Vivian cast on the show. Janet Hubert was the first, and left the show under tremendous stress and personal issues, which was highlighted rather poignantly on the reunion show, when her and Will Smith met to work out those issues that led to the recasting. Regardless, Daphne Maxwell Reid steered the character to the end of the show in 1996, and did one more episode (75) as Aunt Vivian than Hubert.



Daphne Maxwell Reid (left) and the Cast of 'The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air'

Photo credit: Warner Home Video

She was born Daphne Etta Maxwell in New York City, and received a scholarship to Northwestern, where she earned a degree in interior design and architecture. She was also the first African American woman to be named Homecoming Queen during her tenure there. She began her modeling career while at the University, and eventually became the first black woman to grace the cover of Glamour magazine. She was working in voiceover when she met actor Robert Conrad, who became a mentor and guide to the next phase of her career, as an actor in Los

Angeles. She made her debut on Conrad's TV series "The Duke" in 1979.

After doing a stint on "WKRP in Cincinnati" in 1982, she connected with her current husband Tim Reid. In Chicago, Reid was well known for his comedy team, "Tom (Dressen) and Tim," the first white and black funnyman duo. The newly dubbed Daphne Maxwell Reid continued to work steadily throughout the 1980s, on iconic TV shows such as "Hill Street Blues," "Simon & Simon" and "Frank's Place" (a show starring her husband). She then became a famous footnote in television history, when she became the "second" Aunt Vivian in 1993 on "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air."

When this interview was first published, Daphne Maxwell Reid was promoting the 50th Anniversary of a famous "sit-in" that she participated in on the Northwestern campus in May of 1968 ... one month after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. Over 100 students, including Ms. Reid, occupied the Bursar's Office for 36 hours, and scored concessions for the black student population at the school. The talk with HollywoodChicago.com focuses on that event, but she does talk about her stint as Aunt Vivian in the audio portion of the following interview from 2018.

HollywoodChicago.com: You are an actor, photographer, seamstress/designer and spokesperson for Virginia State College, and it all has roots in your participation in the sit-ins and civil rights movement of the 1960s. What was your journey and background growing in New York City, that led you to that sit-in at Northwestern University in 1968?

Daphne Maxwell Reid: I came from a family of activists... my mother was an activist, peacenik and woman's libber way before the feminist movement began. She was always involved activism that served the community. She was my inspiration for anything I've done outside of just earning a living.



Daphne Maxwell Reid
Photo credit: Tim Reid

HollywoodChicago.com: The atmosphere of campuses in the 1960s seemed more political and more electric. How would you describe the

atmosphere of Northwestern University as a campus in 1968?

Reid: Physically, it was a beautiful campus, but it was also an atmosphere that wasn’t used to having black people around... we were new to them. There had been a few African American undergrads and graduate students before, but it was in doses of five as opposed to the hundreds that were there in the late 1960s. It felt threatening to them, I guess, but it was also something they just weren’t considering rather than doing it on purpose.

HollywoodChicago.com: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in April of 1968 and the sit-in occurred one month later. How closely tied were those two events, did King’s death fuel some of the energy of the protest?

Reid: I’m sure it was an impetus, but the issues that led to the sit-in had been fomenting for years, as other civil rights deaths had alerted us that things weren’t right on campus and in other places. The needs of what we were asking for had been in the works for many years before.

In the audio portion of the interview, Daphne Maxwell Reid talks further about Dr. King and other civil rights history, her acting career and her connection with another TV series character in her stint as Aunt Vivian on “The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air.”

“The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air Reunion” is currently streaming on HBO Max. [Click here](#) [21] for more information.



[22]

By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [23]
Editor and Film Writer
HollywoodChicago.com
pat@hollywoodchicago.com [22]

© 2020 Patrick McDonald, HollywoodChicago.com

Source URL (retrieved on Apr 25 2024 - 2:30pm):
<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/35463/flashback-daphne-maxwell-reid-aunt-vivian-of-the-fresh-prince-of-bel-air-reunion>

- Links:**
- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/hankq>
 - [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/1968>
 - [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/african-american>
 - [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/alfonso-ribeiro>
 - [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/aunt-vivian>
 - [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/black>
 - [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/carlton>
 - [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/daphne-maxwell-reid>
 - [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hbo-max>
 - [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
 - [11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/interview.html>
 - [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/james-avery>
 - [13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/jazzy-jeff>
 - [14] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/northwestern-university>
 - [15] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/patrick-mcdonald>
 - [16] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/reunion>
 - [17] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/sit-in>
 - [18] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/the-fresh-prince-of-bel-air>
 - [19] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/tim-reid>
 - [20] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/will-smith>
 - [21] <https://www.hbomax.com/>
 - [22] <mailto:pat@hollywoodchicago.com>
 - [23] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAT>