

BY TERRI SCHEXNAYDER

GLOBAL THINKER. AUSTIN ACTIVIST.

**DR. TERRI E. GIVENS, BLOGGER + SCHOLAR,
ENCOURAGES CONVERSATION TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN HER WORLD.**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANNIE RAY
HAIR + MAKEUP BY
TIFFANY TAYLOR, KISS N' MAKEUP

Terri E. Givens is a global powerhouse, a whirlwind of thought-provoking ideas and creative solutions about immigration policies, mental health issues and antidiscrimination debates. Closer to home, she has devised ways to motivate more minority women to get moving and take care of their health. Givens balances her extremely busy life as an associate professor at The University of Texas at Austin, wife, mother of two boys, marathon runner, biker, published author and board member at KLRU-TV, with grace and style.

The petite 46-year-old, who speaks fluent French and German, carries a lot of weight, whether lecturing in her graduate level political science class or taking a stand for human rights in a European board room.

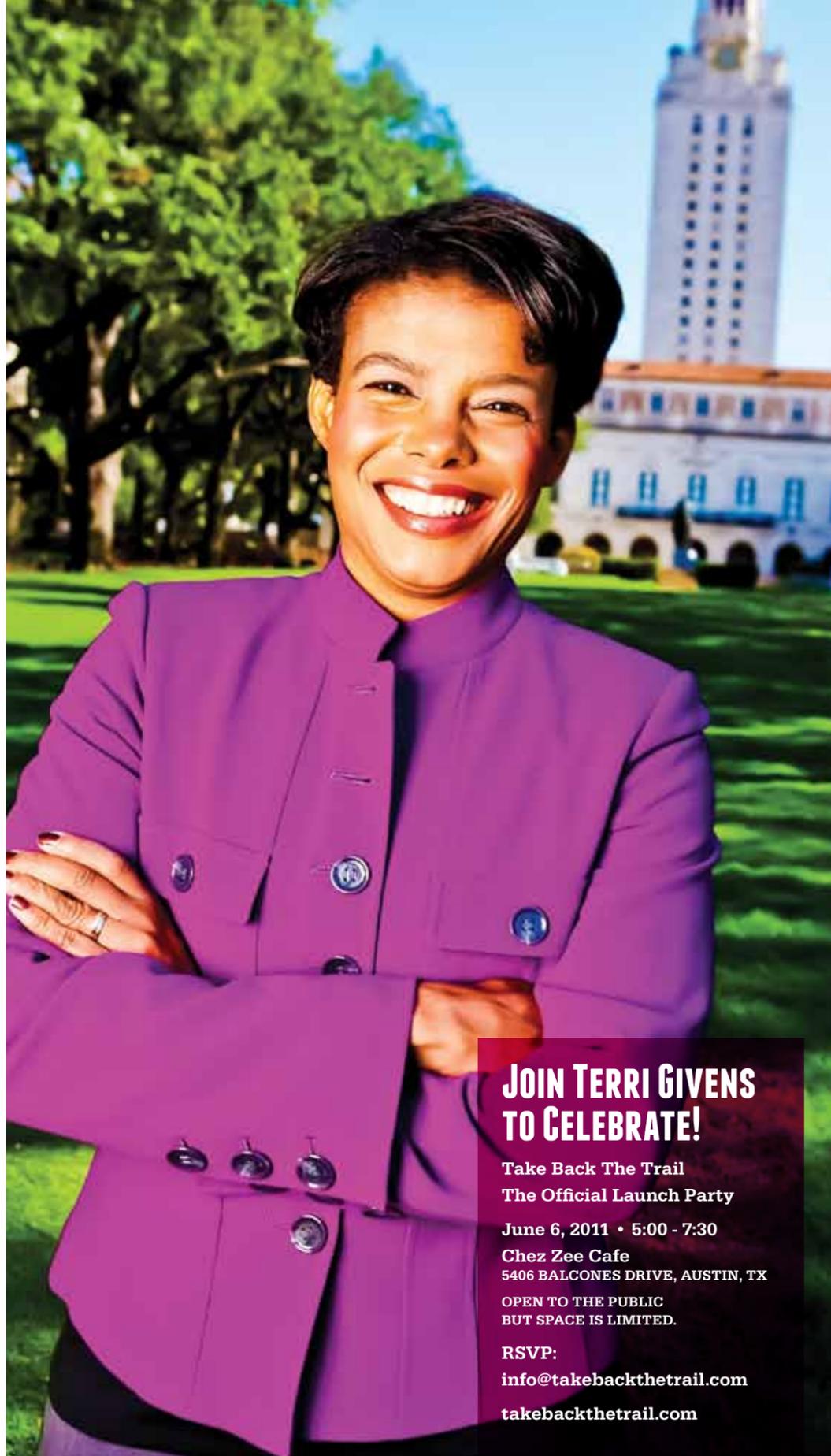
Givens came into the world the last in a line of five girls and two boys in a Catholic, military family. As the baby ("the unexpected

one"), she was often teased by her siblings as being spoiled, but she knows she had the best of all worlds growing up.

"As my older sisters began to move out of the house, I hung out mostly with my brothers, playing football and Cowboys and Indians," she recalled. "But I also had my Barbie dolls and learned to sew."

Life in Spokane, WA, in the 1960s, Givens noted, "was like being in Mayberry in." Riding bikes to the local pool and sitting down to dinner at 5:30 p.m. every evening when Roy Givens, her father, came home, was "the norm" for her seemingly safe childhood.

But, behind closed doors, Givens' world was anything but normal. Her monthly columns, *Running 'Round the Ivory Tower* for *Inside Higher Ed* magazine, provide insight into her very challenging and rewarding life: (continued on page 43) >



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GIVENS AT A GLANCE

HOMETOWN:

Spokane, WA

FAMILY:

Youngest of 7 children
in military family

FIRST ACADEMIC JOB:

University of Washington
Department of Political Science

HUSBAND:

Mike Scott, semiconductor designer

CHILDREN:

Andrew, 10, and Brandon, 7

WHAT SHE VALUES MOST:

Honesty, Loyalty + Integrity

GUILTY PLEASURE:

"I am a shopaholic for clothes
and home accessories."

HER FAVORITE READS:

Let the Great World Spin
The Poisonwood Bible
Water for Elephants
The Lovely Bones
Song of Solomon

WHAT'S COMING UP?

Her book, *Immigrant Politics* to be
released February 2012.

In process of developing a "virtual
think tank" to examine immigration
policy at the local, state and national
levels, both from a U.S. and
international perspective.



TERRI'S TAKE ON IMMIGRATION ISSUES

"What I try to impress on people is that immigration is a very complicated issue and we tend to want to simplify it. What is at the heart of the issue in Texas is we all have had some interaction with undocumented persons who mow our lawn, take care of our kids at daycare or clean our hotel room. We like the fact that things don't cost much, but they are here illegally and probably being taken advantage of with their wages.

We need to change the way we do our visas, for example. A clear sign for that change is the fact that there are 12 million people in the country who are not documented."

TOP ACHIEVEMENTS AT HOME & ABROAD

Stanford University: Studied International Security and Arms Control under Condoleezza Rice. (1984-1985)

University of Texas at Austin: The first African-American female Vice Provost. (2006-2009)

Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the House Armed Services Committee, Washington, D.C.: One of four congressional witnesses to speak on Middle Eastern language programs necessary in higher education. (2008)

Organized the first week-long conference between The University of Texas and five top universities in Mexico City, leading to collaborations between researchers in Mexico and Texas on immigration, education, energy and sustainability issues. (2008)

American Political Science Association Presidential Task Force: Co-Chair, Political Science in the 21st Century. (2008-2010)

Strauss Center for International Law and Security: Distinguished Scholar. (2009 to present)

MENTAL HEALTH: LET'S TALK ABOUT IT (APRIL 2011)

"My mother had borderline personality disorder, but it wasn't officially diagnosed until after my father passed away in 2001. Mental illness was something that affected nearly everyone in (her mother's) family ... these people lived during very difficult times: born during the Depression in the South under Jim Crow and then having to go to work at an early age to take care of their families, during times of war. It's a miracle that so many people from that generation still have their sanity."

It wasn't until Givens read a book in 2002, *Stop Walking on Eggshells: Taking Your Life Back When Someone You Care About has Borderline Personality Disorder* by Paul T. Mason, M.D. and Randi Kreger, that she realized what she thought was a typical upbringing, was anything but that.

"You never knew what my mom's mood would be. She could suddenly go off on one of her yelling sprees, but I also remember the good times. As a child, you don't know what 'normal' is, until you get out, and see what you are missing out on in life," shared Givens.

Keeping busy with school activities, friends and sports events were outlets to avoid her tumultuous household; often leaving home at 7 a.m. and returning late that evening. Although she feels very fortunate for living through her childhood experiences because it ultimately produced the caring mother and successful woman she is today, Givens still finds herself making excuses about her mother's behavior.

"It's hard for me to talk about it being abuse, since it was mostly verbal and emotional, because I want to say that 'verbal' is not abusive. But, it is."

With everything she learns from life, Givens shares with others. She gave friends the book that brought her a new understanding about the illness of her mother, Leora Givens, who passed away last year. More importantly, Givens' hard life lessons now make her a better mom.

"When my first son, Andrew, was born, I realized what unconditional love was and that I was capable of giving it, even if I didn't have that myself," she said.

ADVICE FOR WANNABE PROFS (JANUARY 2010)

"One of the most successful people to come out of the graduate program at UCLA during my time happens to be an African-American male who got his undergraduate degree from a state university and was a first-generation college student. From my perspective, determination and maturity have a lot to do with getting through a graduate program successfully."

As Givens excelled in track, volleyball and her studies during high school, she also discovered another passion.

"One of my sisters took me to a McGovern rally in 1972 and I was intrigued by that event. I also watched the Vietnam War and Watergate hearings on television (including Barbara Jordan's impressive work), so I became interested in government during that era," she said.

Her maternal grandmother often spoke in her second language, which prompted Givens to take French lessons in middle school. That education "opened up the world of France and Europe to me," she explained. As one of the top six students in her high school and a star athlete, Givens was recruited by Stanford University's track coach and eventually chose international relations as her major. Her college graduation in 1987 was the first of many educational achievements. She proudly wears her class ring as a symbol of the fact that she worked her way through Stanford, often clocking 30-hours-a-week at her job.

After working in the nonprofit sector between undergrad and grad school, Givens went on to earn an M.A. from the University of California, Los Angeles' Department of Political Science, in 1996 and her Ph.D. in comparative politics and methodology from the

same university three years later.

Givens' academic and professional portfolio clearly demonstrates her drive and intelligence. Her main areas of research, Western European politics and immigration policy, have resulted in the publication of three books, more than 15 articles and book chapters and a well-respected place at international tables around the world to discuss these critical issues. She has participated in important academic conferences around the U.S., as well as taking part in the European Union's Equality Summit and the UN Minority Issues Summit.

“AS ONE OF THE TOP SIX STUDENTS IN HER HIGH SCHOOL AND A STAR ATHLETE, GIVENS WAS RECRUITED BY STANFORD UNIVERSITY’S TRACK COACH AND EVENTUALLY CHOSE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AS HER MAJOR. HER COLLEGE GRADUATION IN 1987 WAS THE FIRST OF MANY EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS.”



WHY I STUDY EUROPE (AUGUST 2010)

"Although I have studied European politics my entire academic career, there remains a very tiny sliver of doubt about my research agenda. The sliver of doubt comes into play when I think about the fact that there are so few African-Americans in political science. So shouldn't I be studying race and politics, a topic that is so central to my identity? Or as a woman, should I be focused on issues of gender? For me, the answer is 'of course not.'"

After years of being asked why she studies Europe, Givens now answers, "Because I can!" She is proud of her family links to France and Germany and has delved into learning more about her roots. She once discovered she had relatives from the 1700s who had come to Louisiana from Wurtemberg, Germany and understood why her great-great-grandfather was named "Adolphe."

"I often wonder if this is why I have been able to become so fluent in German as well as French," Givens said.

Her office at UT is decorated with posters of patriotic symbols, a photo of Barbara Jordan, a letter from Ann Richards, and, as with most large families, the faces of many relatives. One poster of an elderly African-American man sitting on the porch with the U.S. flag next to him resembles Givens' father in the photo below the print.

"That's why I got that poster. Europeans often ask me, 'Why are African-Americans so patriotic and join the military so readily?' I tell them our blood is in the soil," she said.

LESSONS FROM LOSS (JULY 2010)

"One of the things I love about being a professor is the flexibility it provides. Of course, it helps to have a spouse who can manage the home and kids while I am away ... going forward, I plan to spend more time with my children and take care of projects at home. I know that priorities will change over time, and unexpected opportunities and challenges are part of life. Finding the balance between family and career is a never-ending challenge."

“MIKE IS MY ROCK AND THE KEY REASON THAT I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO BALANCE HAVING CHILDREN AND A BUSY CAREER. HE IS A DEVOTED FATHER WHO DEDICATES HIS FREE TIME TO HIS KIDS AND DOESN'T MISS A BEAT WHEN I'M OUT OF TOWN. ”

Last summer, Givens, her husband and two sons traveled to Paris for eight weeks, during which time she conducted research on book projects regarding antidiscrimination policy at the European Union and on national levels. It was the perfect romantic spot for the couple to also celebrate their 15th wedding anniversary.

Givens first met Mike Scott at Stanford, while they were dating other people. Mike was a jazz DJ at the campus radio stations and Givens, a regular listener, would attend concerts with Mike and friends. Their friendship grew and so did Givens' attraction to Mike. On New Year's Eve, 1991, the two joined Jamie Dupree, their college friend and an attorney in San Francisco, for the day.

"That 'fateful' night started out innocently enough. It was Mike's birthday and we decided to spend time at the museum and then go out to a bar in North Beach. It was only as the evening progressed that it was clear something more was going on between them," explained Dupree. "Mike and Terri are incredibly well-suited for each other and in retrospect, amazing they didn't get together sooner and remarkable that the stars aligned for them to get together when they did."

Nicknamed "Terri-ble" by Dupree for "her belly laughs and having a million things going on" during Stanford, Givens fully appreciates Mike's support and equal partnership when it comes to her busy career, travel schedule and parenting.

"Mike is my rock and the key reason that I have been able to balance having children and a busy career. He is a devoted father who dedicates his free time to his kids and doesn't miss a beat when I'm out of town," said Givens.

MY MOTIVATION FOR STARTING TAKE BACK THE TRAIL (OCTOBER 2010)

"A recent article in Obesity states that 'At the current rate of increase, it will take less than 30 years for all black women to become overweight or obese.' It is no secret that it is more likely that a woman or child from a poor neighborhood will have little or no access to healthy food and/or time to exercise."

A competitive Masters runner and avid cyclist, Givens practices daily what she advocates to other minority women. She proudly hops on her purple "diva" bike and rides to her campus office not far from the historic Aldrich Place neighborhood where she and her family live. Givens came in 12th in her age group at the 2010 3M Half Marathon and has even won her age group in a couple of smaller 5Ks.

"Considering the type of women runners we have in this town, and the fact that I started my running career as a sprinter, I am very proud of those accomplishments," she said.

What she is equally proud of is the chance to inspire others to take back their "heart, health and community." Givens, along with a group of fitness-oriented women and men, just launched Take Back the Trail (www.takebackthetrail.com), a socially

conscious fitness apparel line. The company has two primary components: A 12-week training program for a group of minority women who will participate in a 5K walk or run at the end of the session and a brand of playful and stylish active wear in extended sizes. The sale of all fitness apparel will go to support the training program.

"It doesn't matter which trail you are on or what gets you going. What is important is that the trail starts in our own homes and that we are all on a journey together. Our hope is to create a fun and innovative way for women to improve their health and that of their families," said Givens.

A true pioneer in her life's journey, Givens is just the one to lead others along their special paths. *aw*

MORE INFO

Givens' blog: givensimmigration.blogspot.com

Email: tgivens@yahoo.com

takebackthetrail.com

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