

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Lorraine Toussaint

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Toussaint, Lorraine, 1960-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Lorraine Toussaint,
<b>Dates:</b>	October 6, 2004
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2004
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:09:23).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Actress Lorraine Toussaint (1960 - ) has been nominated for four NAACP Image Awards, and starred in four seasons on the Lifetime Television drama, "Any Day Now," as Rene Jackson. Toussaint has also appeared in a number of films and television shows, including, "Point of No Return," starring alongside Bridget Fonda, and, "Dangerous Minds," with Michelle Pfeiffer. Toussaint was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 6, 2004, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2004_195
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Actress Lorraine Toussaint was born April 4, 1960, in Trinidad, in the West Indies. At the age of ten, her family relocated to New York City, where a young Toussaint was intrigued when she came upon a large ad in the telephone book for a theater school. Finding her calling in the performing arts, Toussaint attended the renowned High School of Performing Arts and then went on to attend the Juilliard School.

Toussaint landed her first paying acting job on the day she received her diploma from Juilliard, playing Lady MacBeth with "Shakespeare & Company" in New York. She spent the next twelve years on stage in New York before moving to Los Angeles to pursue a career in film and television. Her decision to move proved right, with Toussaint landing numerous roles on a variety of television programs, including recurring roles on *Law & Order* and *Murder One* and regular lead roles on *Leaving L.A.*, *Where I Live* and *Amazing Grace*. She also appeared in numerous made-for-television movies, including the mini-series *Queen* based on the novel by Alex Haley.

Toussaint starred for four seasons on the Lifetime Television drama *Any Day Now* as Rene Jackson. Her work on the program garnered her four NAACP Image Award nominations for Best Actress in a Drama Series; a T.V. Guide Award nomination; and a Wiley A. Branton Award from the National Bar Association. Toussaint has also appeared in a number of films, including *Point of No Return*, starring alongside Bridget Fonda and *Dangerous Minds*, with Michelle Pfeiffer. Toussaint has also appeared on the television series *Crossing Jordan*, *Judging Amy*, *The Closer* and *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*. She also appeared in the made-for-television movie version of Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* with Halle Berry and Ruby Dee.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Lorraine Toussaint was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 6, 2004, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Actress Lorraine Toussaint (1960 - ) has been nominated for four NAACP Image Awards, and starred in four seasons on the Lifetime Television drama, "Any Day Now," as Rene Jackson. Toussaint has also appeared in a number of films and television shows, including, "Point of No Return," starring alongside Bridget Fonda, and, "Dangerous Minds," with Michelle Pfeiffer.

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## Restrictions

### Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

### Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

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## Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

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## Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

### Persons:

Toussaint, Lorraine, 1960-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Toussaint, Lorraine, 1960---Interviews

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African American actresses--Interviews

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African Americans--Genealogy

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Trinidad and Tobago--Social conditions

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Mothers--Employment--United States

Mothers and daughters

Voyages and travels--United States

Fighting (Psychology)

Education--Trinidad

High School of Performing Arts (New York, N.Y.)

Children of parents with disabilities--United States

Juilliard School

Discrimination in employment

Motion picture acting

Field, Sally

Television acting

African American television producers and directors

African Americans in motion pictures

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Actress

HistoryMakers® Category:

EntertainmentMakers

Administrative Information

## Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

## Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Lorraine Toussaint, October 6, 2004. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

## Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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## Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

### Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Lorraine Toussaint, Section A2004\_195\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:30  
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Lorraine Toussaint talks about her mother's ancestry, personality and the extended family matriarchy that influenced her as a child. Toussaint recalls her father's rural family origins. Lastly, Toussaint talks about the European influences, ethnic groups and skin color politics that exist in Trinidadian culture.

African American actresses--Interviews.

African Americans--Genealogy.

Trinidad and Tobago--Social conditions.

Mothers--Employment--United States.

Mothers and daughters.

Voyages and travels--United States.

Fighting (Psychology).

Education--Trinidad.

High School of Performing Arts (New York, N.Y.).

Children of parents with disabilities--United States.

Juilliard School.

Discrimination in employment.

Motion picture acting.

Field, Sally.

Television acting.

African American television producers and directors.

African Americans in motion pictures.

Video Oral History Interview with Lorraine Toussaint, Section A2004\_195\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:18  
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Lorraine Toussaint recalls meeting her father's family in Trinidad as an adult, and talks about his personality. Toussaint then shares some of her traumatic childhood memories when her mother went to the U.S. to work for three years. She then shares a story representative of her mother's feisty personality. Lastly, Toussaint recalls her journey to the U.S. to rejoin her mother at age ten.

Video Oral History Interview with Lorraine Toussaint, Section A2004\_195\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:48  
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Lorraine Toussaint recalls emigrating to the U.S. from Trinidad at age ten. Toussaint then details her very first fight. She then talks about the schools she attended in Trinidad and the U.S. and comments on the teachers that inspired her. Toussaint recounts how she chose acting as a career and talks about how she was accepted at New York's High School for the Performing Arts. Lastly, Toussaint reflects on her teenage years and the hardships experienced due to her mother's illness.

Video Oral History Interview with Lorraine Toussaint, Section A2004\_195\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:13  
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Lorraine Toussaint recalls the difficulties balancing her education and career aspirations with caring for her disabled mother. Toussaint describes the rigors of the Juilliard School's teaching methods and then comments on her inability to get acting roles due to racial or ethnic prejudices. She then discusses many of the roles she's played, her acting role models, and lastly, her approach to acting.

Video Oral History Interview with Lorraine Toussaint, Section A2004\_195\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:39  
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Lorraine Toussaint talks about her acting technique and details her preparation for roles, using the advice actress Sally Field gave her. Toussaint then recounts the various movie and television roles she played throughout the 1990s.

Video Oral History Interview with Lorraine Toussaint, Section A2004\_195\_001\_006, TRT: 0:27:58  
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Lorraine Toussaint recalls her first movie working with a black director and shares her career highlights. Toussaint then shares her hopes and concerns for the African American community and those in the acting business in Hollywood. She then comments on her future endeavors, including her aspirations to become a spiritual therapist. Lastly, Toussaint considers her legacy and how she wishes to be remembered.

Video Oral History Interview with Lorraine Toussaint, Section A2004\_195\_001\_007, TRT: 0:12:57  
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Lorraine Toussaint narrates her photographs.