

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Bobby Jones

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## Overview of the Collection

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| <b>Repository:</b>           | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616<br>info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com   |
| <b>Creator:</b>              | Jones, Bobby  |
| <b>Title:</b>                | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Bobby Jones,   |
| <b>Dates:</b>                | April 24, 2014  |
| <b>Bulk Dates:</b>           | 2014  |
| <b>Physical Description:</b> | 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:44:25).   |
| <b>Abstract:</b>             | Gospel singer and television host Bobby Jones (1938 - ) was the Grammy Award-winning host and executive producer of BET's "Bobby Jones Gospel," the longest continuously running original series on cable television. He was also the author of two books: Touched By God and Make A Joyful Noise. Jones was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 24, 2014, in Nashville, Tennessee. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| <b>Identification:</b>       | A2014_109   |
| <b>Language:</b>             | The interview and records are in English.   |

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Gospel vocalist and television host Bobby Jones was born on September 18, 1938 in Henry County, Tennessee. He excelled academically, graduating from high school at age fifteen and Tennessee State University at age nineteen, where he received his B.S. degree in elementary education. Jones went on to receive his M.Ed. degree from Tennessee State University and his Ed.D. degree from Vanderbilt University. He also graduated from Payne's Theological Seminary with his Th.D. degree.

Jones taught elementary students in the St. Louis Public Schools from 1959 to 1965, and Nashville Metropolitan Schools from 1966 to 1968. He then became a textbook consultant for McGraw Hill Publishers and worked as an instructor at Tennessee State University from 1974 to 1986. As a teacher, Jones helped develop the idea for a Black Expo in Nashville, Tennessee. During that effort, he introduced the pilot for what became "Bobby Jones Gospel" to WSM-TV in Nashville. WSM-TV picked up the show and it ran in Nashville from 1976 to 1980. Jones also created, produced and hosted "Bobby Jones' World," a magazine-style show that ran from 1978 to 1984.

In 1980, Black Entertainment Television premie`red "Bobby Jones Gospel," the longest continuously running original series on cable television, where Jones serves as host and executive producer. Jones then produced the show "Video Gospel," which premiered on BET in 1986. He went on to produce and host a number of other shows, including The Word Television Network's "Bobby Jones Gospel Classics" and "Bobby Jones Presents," the BET Gospel Network's "Let's Talk Church," and The Gospel Channel's "Gospel Vignettes" and "Bobby Jones Next Generation". He has also hosted "The Bobby Jones Radio Show" and "The Bobby Jones Gospel Countdown," which have aired on The Sheridan Gospel Radio Network. Jones has toured with the musical group, New Life; he oversees The Nashville Super Choir; and, for twenty-four years, was host of "The Dr. Bobby Jones International Gospel Industry Retreat." He has opened his own production studio in Nashville, and is an instructor at Nova Southeastern University.

Jones' discography includes "Sooner or Later" (1978), "There's Hope for This World" (1979), "Caught Up" (1980), "Soul Set Free" (1982), "Come Together" (1984), "Tin Gladje" (1985), "I'll Never Forget" (1989), "Another Time" (1990), "Bring It To Jesus" (1995), "Just Churchin" (1998), "Live In Perusia, Italy" (2004), "Faith Unscripted" (2007), and "The Ambassador" (2007). He has authored two books: 1998's *Touched By God*, and the 2000 memoir, *Make A Joyful Noise, My Twenty Five Years In Gospel Music*.

In 1980, Jones received the Gabriel Award and an International Film Festival Award for writing and performing *Make A Joyful Noise*, a black gospel opera which aired on PBS. In 1984, he won a Grammy Award for the Best Soul Gospel Performance By A Duo Or Group with Barbara Mandrell for "I'm So Glad I'm Standing Here Today." Jones has also received a Dove Award, three Stellar Awards, three Trumpet Awards, and a presidential commendation from President George W. Bush.

Bobby Jones was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on April 24, 2014.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Bobby Jones was conducted by Larry Crowe on April 24, 2014, in Nashville, Tennessee, and was recorded on 6 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Gospel singer and television host Bobby Jones (1938 - ) was the Grammy Award-winning host and executive producer of BET's "Bobby Jones Gospel," the longest continuously running original series on cable television. He was also the author of two books: *Touched By God* and *Make A Joyful Noise*.

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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:

Jones, Bobby

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Jones, Bobby--Interviews

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## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

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The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

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## Occupations:

Television Host

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Gospel Singer

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

MusicMakers

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## 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 Bobby Jones, April 24, 2014. 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 Bobby Jones, Section A2014\_109\_001\_001, TRT: 1:29:04 ?

Bobby Jones was born on September 18, 1938 in Henry County, Tennessee to Augusta Tharpe Jones and Jim Jones. Both sides of his family originated in Henry County, where they belonged to a rural community of cotton sharecroppers. His paternal great-grandfather, Antiny Dinwiddie, and grandparents, Lydia Dinwiddie Jones and William Jones, had mixed heritage and no formal education. His maternal grandparents, Cornelia Tharpe and Moses Tharpe, owned property, but the land was infertile, and they were forced to work as sharecroppers to support the family. Jones' mother was educated through the eighth grade at Henry County's Caton School, and married Jones' father at fourteen years old. She then became a housewife, while Jones' father continued to work in the fields. Jones grew up in rural Henry County with his siblings, James Jones and Lula Jones Puckett. His parents and relatives all suffered from alcoholism, which created an abusive household environment.

Video Oral History Interview with Bobby Jones, Section A2014\_109\_001\_002, TRT: 2:31:56 ?

Bobby Jones grew up in a community of sharecroppers in rural Henry County, Tennessee. He belonged to the congregation of the Coles Chapel C.M.E. Church, where he sang traditional religious hymns. At home, he listened to country music on the 'Grand Ole Opry' radio show. Jones completed the first through eighth grades at the all-black Caton School in Henry County. An excellent student, he skipped several grades, and entered Central High School in Paris, Tennessee at the age of eleven years old. Jones was first exposed to gospel music during high school, when he heard Alex Bradford perform the song "Too Close to Heaven" in a radio production of Langston Hughes' play, 'Black Nativity.' Around this time, Jones' father's alcoholism and abuse worsened, so Jones moved with his mother to Paris. She found work as a domestic, while he became a cook at the Paris Landing State Park. Upon graduating from high school, Jones enrolled at Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State University in Nashville, Tennessee.

Video Oral History Interview with Bobby Jones, Section A2014\_109\_001\_003, TRT: 3:32:38 ?

Bobby Jones attended Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State University in Nashville, Tennessee, where he majored in elementary education. After graduating in 1959, Jones accepted a teaching position at Farragut Elementary School in St. Louis, Missouri. While there, Jones earned extra money by playing the piano for local churches. He also earned a master's degree in education. In 1966, Jones returned to Nashville and secured the position of director of curriculum for the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools. While there, he was recruited by McGraw-Hill Education to become a textbook consultant, which allowed him to travel. He also earned an Ed.D. degree from Vanderbilt University in Nashville. Jones then began teaching at Tennessee State University, and helped create the Nashville Black Expo and Music Fest. He eventually resigned due to conflicts with the other organizers. He went on to produce and host the 'Nashville Gospel Show' and 'Bobby Jones World' on WSM-TV.

Video Oral History Interview with Bobby Jones, Section A2014\_109\_001\_004, TRT: 4:28:13 ?

Bobby Jones became a leader of the gospel music community in Nashville, Tennessee during the 1970s. He performed with The Royal Gospel Singers, and created the 'Nashville Gospel Show' and 'Bobby Jones World' programs for WSM-TV. In 1979, Jones left The Royal Gospel Singers, and recorded an album with his new group, New Life. After parting ways with his co-hosts on 'Nashville Gospel Show,' Jones created 'Bobby Jones Gospel,' which was picked up by Robert L. Johnson's newly formed Black Entertainment Television (BET) network in 1980. While the show aired on BET, Jones had complete control over the production, content and distribution of 'Bobby Jones Gospel.' The show included musical appearances by Aretha Franklin and Minister Louis Farrakhan, as well as the breakout performance of Kirk Franklin. In addition to 'Bobby Jones Gospel,' Jones produced BET's 'Video Gospel,' and was instrumental in the creation of the black gospel opera 'Make a Joyful Noise,' which won several film awards.

Video Oral History Interview with Bobby Jones, Section A2014\_109\_001\_005, TRT: 5:29:54 ?

Bobby Jones won a GMA Dove Award and the Grammy Award for Best Soul Gospel Performance in 1984 for his duet with Barbara Mandrell, 'I'm So Glad I'm Standing Here Today.' After the Grammy Awards show, some of the gospel nominees contested Jones' win, because they felt the song did not qualify as gospel music. However, Jones argued that gospel music does not have to explicitly mention a deity. At this point, Jones describes the history of gospel music, which was created by Thomas A. Dorsey in the early 1930s. He also talks about his gospel influences and favorite artists, like Andrae Crouch, Edwin Hawkins and Al Green. His mentors included Minister Louis Farrakhan, Reverend Al Sharpton and Maya Angelou, whom he met while teaching at Tennessee State University. Additionally, Jones describes his books: 'Touched by God,' which was a collection of stories about the lives of thirteen black female gospel singers; and 'Make a Joyful Noise,' which was an autobiography of his life.

Video Oral History Interview with Bobby Jones, Section A2014\_109\_001\_006, TRT: 6:12:40 ?

Bobby Jones married gospel singer Ethel Williams Jones in 1995. At this point in the interview, Jones talks about the rise of megachurches, and their contributions to the community. He also describes the production costs of his show, 'Bobby Jones Gospel.' In addition to his television program, Jones was appointed by the governments of Dominica and the Bahamas to promote tourism and economic development on the islands. Jones describes his hopes and concerns for the African American community, and reflects upon his life and legacy. He concludes the interview describing how he would like to be remembered.