

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Reverend Dr. Harold E. Bailey

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Bailey, Harold E., 1938-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Harold E. Bailey,
Dates:	November 10, 2004
Bulk Dates:	2004
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:30:37).
Abstract:	Gospel singer and criminal justice activist Reverend Dr. Harold E. Bailey (1938 -) is the founder and president of Probation Challenge, a rehabilitation program for offenders, and is best known as the lead singer of the Harold Bailey Singers. Bailey was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 10, 2004, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2004_229
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Founder and president of Probation Challenge/PCC Internet Broadcast Network, Reverend Dr. Harold E. Bailey was born February 12, 1938 in Chicago, Illinois to Adolphus and Lillian Bailey. He attended Forrestville Elementary School and graduated from Englewood High School in 1957. Bailey continued his education at Wilson Junior College, Central State University, Chicago State University and Governors State University.

Bailey was known from the 1950's through the 1970's as the lead singer of the Harold Bailey Singers. The Bailey Singers recorded gospel music with the Rush, HOB and Savoy record labels and appeared on Chicago television's *Jubilee Showcase*.

As a Cook County probation officer, Bailey noted that Bailey was concerned about the merry go round of recidivism and the spiraling wave of crime in the African American community. In 1979, he proposed a rehabilitation program for offenders, which was supported by Judge R. Eugene Pincham. The program was implemented as a serious attempt at rehabilitation. Pincham's courtroom, jury room and office were converted to part time classroom space. Judge William Cousins and Judge Earl Strayhorn also supported Bailey's efforts. In 1984, then state representative, Carol Mosely Braun and the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus sponsored the Probation Challenge Act. The late Mayor Harold Washington helped Bailey move the program out of the criminal courts building and into Olive Harvey Community College. Unlearned, unskilled, socially deprived, adult and juvenile and electronically monitored clients are mandated to into the program. Probation Challenge is a radio and television broadcast that educates people as they return to society from within the judicial system. The organization was priased by late, federal Judge Prentice Marshall.

Bailey has appeared on ABC-TV's *Good Morning America* and CBS - TV's *60 Minutes*. Bailey, the recipient of numerous awards nationally and internationally, continues this valuable work, the only court-mandated program of its kind in the United States continues to work and live in Chicago.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Reverend Dr. Harold E. Bailey was conducted by Larry Crowe on November 10, 2004, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Gospel singer and criminal justice activist Reverend Dr. Harold E. Bailey (1938 -) is the founder and president of Probation Challenge, a rehabilitation program for offenders, and is best known as the lead singer of the Harold Bailey Singers.

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®.

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.

Controlled Access Terms

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

Persons:

Bailey, Harold E., 1938-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Bailey, Harold E., 1938---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Nonprofit Chief Executive

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

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 Reverend Dr. Harold E. Bailey, November 10, 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 6/7/2022 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

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.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Harold E. Bailey, Section A2004_229_001_001, TRT: 0:29:27 2004/11/10

Reverend Harold E. Bailey was born on February 12, 1938 in Chicago, Illinois. His mother, Lillian Cotry Bailey, was born in Clarksdale, Mississippi in 1916. Her mother and grandmother became domestic workers after the family migrated to Chicago, Illinois. There, Lillian met Bailey's father, Adolphus Jerome Bailey, Sr., an automobile inspector who later worked for the Cook

County Board of Elections. Twenty-five years her senior, Bailey, Sr. was born in Lebanon, Tennessee in 1891. He served in the segregated U.S. Army during World War I and later became a supporter of President Harry S. Truman, who desegregated the [U.S.] Armed Forces. Raised on Chicago's South Side, Bailey attended Englewood High School and Christ Temple Cathedral Church, part of the Church of Christ (Holiness) U.S.A. At the age of twelve, he became a Christian. Largely sheltered in Chicago, Bailey first experienced segregation in the South when his choir group performed in Memphis, Tennessee.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Harold E. Bailey, Section A2004_229_001_002, TRT: 0:30:08 2004/11/10

Reverend Harold E. Bailey attended Christ Temple Cathedral Church in Chicago with his aunt who reared him although Bailey spent time as a child with his parents and siblings as well. Bailey describes his religious influences and his early love for the Bible and gospel music. As a youth, Bailey sought to emulate his father whom he admired. On Chicago's South Side, Bailey attended Forrestville Elementary School and Englewood High School. He describes his memories of high school including an experience of racial discrimination, playing the organ, and forming a social bond with the other black students who were limited in number. After graduating in 1957, Bailey attended Woodrow Wilson Junior College in Chicago before transferring to Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio. At Wilberforce, he heard musical performances from figures like Coretta Scott King, Charlotte Wesley, Nancy Wilson, and Leontyne Price. As a student, Bailey also had the opportunity to see Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. speak.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Harold E. Bailey, Section A2004_229_001_003, TRT: 0:30:18 2004/11/10

Reverend Harold E. Bailey studied music at Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio, where he formed the Harold Bailey Singers with fellow students. Bailey talks about University president Charles Wesley, the rise of gospel music, and meeting gospel legend Thomas A. Dorsey. After falling ill his junior year, Bailey returned home to Chicago, Illinois. Around 1962, he joined the U.S. Army, but was discharged after further illness. Bailey then attended Chicago State University and Governors State University in Chicago before working at the Chicago Water Department after his father's forced retirement. In 1967, Bailey accepted a job at the Cook County Adult Probation Department. Feeling the system needed reform, he began counseling offenders against his superiors' wishes with the help of HistoryMaker R. Eugene Pincham. He describes the conflict between the mayor, Richard J. Daley, and U.S. Representative Ralph Metcalfe over police brutality in the black community. Bailey was ordained as a minister in 1978.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Harold E. Bailey, Section A2004_229_001_004, TRT: 0:30:19 2004/11/10

Reverend Harold E. Bailey describes Probation Challenge, a court-mandated program he founded in Cook County, Illinois providing offenders with education and training to succeed outside of prison. He explains that with help from HistoryMaker Judge R. Eugene Pincham, the program has been successful since its 1979 inception at reducing criminal recidivism. However, Bailey identifies several obstacles preventing the program from expanding and reaching its full potential. He also describes the state of the prison-industrial complex in Illinois, arguing that racial sentencing disparities and policies encouraging recidivism are designed to enrich rent-seeking insiders at the taxpayer's expense. He describes how the American War on Drugs contributes to this system. Despite these

obstacles, Bailey hopes that progress will be made and that criminal justice reforms will be instituted.

Video Oral History Interview with Reverend Dr. Harold E. Bailey, Section A2004_229_001_005, TRT: 0:30:25 2004/11/10

Reverend Harold E. Bailey reflects upon his life and legacy. In 1998, he was named to the Cook County Board of Corrections by Sheriff James O'Grady in Illinois. He subsequently succeeded Dorothy Drish as the Board's chair, serving with HistoryMaker Senator Howard Brookins, Sr. and Chicago Defender editor Frederick Sengstacke. When O'Grady's successor as sheriff, Michael Sheahan, attempted to illegally appoint Callie Baird as director of Cook County Jail without the Board's consent, Bailey led a legal effort leading to Baird's court-ordered removal. Bailey says he has received anonymous and public support for fighting corruption. Bailey reflects upon his hopes and concerns for the African American community. Bailey concludes his interview by narrating his photographs.