

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Alice Bussey

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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>	Bussey, Alice, 1947-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Alice Bussey,
<b>Dates:</b>	February 20, 2006
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2006
<b>Physical Description:</b>	6 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:43:25).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Florist Alice Bussey (1947 - ) is an internationally known floral business owner. The first African American FTD florist in Atlanta, she serves on the board of The International Florists Association. Bussey was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 20, 2006, in Decatur, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2006_028
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Florist Alice Mae White Bussey was born on July 31, 1947, in South DeKalb County, Georgia, the tenth of twelve children to Oscar Curtis White, Sr., a carpenter, and Eula Belle Shepard White, a homemaker. After graduating from high school, Bussey completed her B.A. degree in sociology at Los Angeles City College. Later, she completed her second B.A. degree in urban studies at Windsor College and her M.A. degree in public administration from Los Angeles City College.

A lifelong member of Poplar Springs Baptist Church, Bussey's ancestors were

among the founders of the church more than 135 years ago.

After completing undergraduate and graduate school in California and working concurrently for the United States Department of Labor, Bussey returned to Georgia to serve as the first Labor Department federal representative of the state. In that capacity, she managed millions of dollars, conducted investigations and developed programs for the elderly, welfare clients, and high school dropouts. Bussey was also the Federal Women's Program manager for the eight state, Southeastern Region. In 1985, Bussey became the first woman elected as president of the Atlanta Business League.

After her marriage to florist James Bussey, she began her career in the floral industry. Soon, she became the first African American FTD florist in Atlanta. Having helped create over twenty new businesses, Bussey is internationally known in the industry for training small business owners. Over a thirty-year period, Bussey's florist has grown from a local retail operation to one that does business internationally. The Busseys have traveled extensively, developing business markets throughout the USA, Europe, and Africa. They were members of former Atlanta mayor Andrew Young's historic trade mission to Jamaica, Trinidad and Tabago, and Barbados.

Bussey serves on the board of The International Florists Association (IFA), Georgia Council of Visitors, Atlanta Private Industry Council, and many others. She and her husband are the parents of three adult children and one grandchild. They reside in Decatur, Georgia.

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## **Scope and Content**

This life oral history interview with Alice Bussey was conducted by Ed Anderson on February 20, 2006, in Decatur, Georgia, and was recorded on 6 Betacame SP videocassettes. Florist Alice Bussey (1947 - ) is an internationally known floral business owner. The first African American FTD florist in Atlanta, she serves on the board of The International Florists Association.

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## **Restrictions**

### **Restrictions on Access**

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

## 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:

Bussey, Alice, 1947-

Anderson, Ed (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Bussey, Alice, 1947---Interviews

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Florists--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews

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African American businesspeople--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews

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African American businesspeople--Georgia--Atlanta--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:**

Florist

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## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

BusinessMakers

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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 Alice Bussey, February 20, 2006. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

### **Processing Information**

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 2/5/2020 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 Alice Bussey, Section  
A2006\_028\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:50 2006/02/20

Alice Bussey was born on July 31, 1947 in Ellenwood, Georgia to Eula Shepherd White and Oscar White, Sr. Her mother's parents, Fannie Gleaton Shepherd and Jesse Shepherd, were sharecroppers in Ellenwood, and they had nine children, eight of which stayed in the area. Her mother's family eventually owned most of the land. Bussey recalls how her family often created the goods they needed by using skills that they learned from their ancestors, such as landscaping and painting. Bussey's grandfather worshiped with his neighbors under a poplar tree before eventually founding Poplar Missionary Baptist Church, which Bussey and her family attended. Bussey's father was born in Winder, Georgia and moved to Ellenwood as a teenager. He and Bussey's mother married young and had twelve children, of which Bussey is the tenth. He worked in several trades, including carpentry. Bussey's maternal family mostly remained in Ellenwood. She describes their annual family reunions.

Florists--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews.

African American businesspeople--Georgia--Atlanta--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Alice Bussey, Section

A2006\_028\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:50 2006/02/20

Alice Bussey talks about her paternal side of the family. Her father, Oscar White, Sr., was church clerk at Poplar Springs Missionary Baptist Church because he could read and write unlike many of the church's members. Bussey's family was heavily involved in the church as her mother's family had helped to found it in 1871. Reverend A.D. Williams King, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s brother, also pastored there. Bussey remembers how she and her eleven siblings cleaned and cooked at their home, celebrated Christmas with simple gifts like fruit and sang together. As a child, she played at a baseball diamond with her siblings and neighbors. Bussey enjoyed reading, and hoped to travel when she grew older. She attended County Line School during her elementary years. She was bussed to Hamilton High School in Scottdale, Georgia due to segregation. There, she was encouraged by business teacher Jennie Harlan.

Video Oral History Interview with Alice Bussey, Section  
A2006\_028\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:30 2006/02/20

Alice Bussey remembers the impact of her father's early death on her family. At Hamilton High School, her business teacher, Jennie Harlan, emphasized vocational skills. Bussey was influenced by HistoryMaker Narvie Harris, who did civic work with Bussey's mother. Bussey remembers mourning President John Kennedy's assassination and the impact of the Vietnam War on her neighborhood. The death of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. inspired her to study the history and policies of civil rights. Bussey attended business school in Georgia for two years before moving to California, where she eventually attended Los Angeles City College; earned two undergraduate degrees; and met her husband, James Bussey, Jr., whom she married in 1975. Bussey traveled between semesters and worked for the U.S. Department of Labor, where she eventually became the first African American federal representative over the State of Georgia. Bussey shares her memories of Coretta Scott King, a frequent customer of Bussey's Florist and Gifts.

Video Oral History Interview with Alice Bussey, Section  
A2006\_028\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:10 2006/02/20

Alice Bussey worked for the U.S. Department of Labor in Georgia from 1975 to 1984, where she focused on tax and public policy as manager of the Federal Women's Program. Bussey worked with Atlanta mayor's chief-of-staff Shirley Franklin and Dr. Michael Lomax in her efforts to provide more business opportunities for minorities in Georgia. When her husband, James Bussey, Jr., decided to expand the operations of Bussey's Florist and Gifts, she left the Department of Labor to help him. They received the Florist Trans World Delivery certification, which allowed them to deliver worldwide. Bussey was elected delegate to the White House Conference on Small Business in 1986, and also sought to educate people about the floral industry. Bussey traveled with HistoryMaker Andrew Young on a trade mission that emphasized African American businesses in 1989. Bussey's Florist and Gifts has provided flowers for HistoryMaker Xernona Clayton. Bussey also describes the state of the floral industry and her civic work.

Video Oral History Interview with Alice Bussey, Section  
A2006\_028\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:55 2006/02/20

Alice Bussey worked with the organization Concerned Black Clergy to raise community awareness of business and public policy issues. While serving as president of the Atlanta Business league, Bussey created the Super Tuesday Conference for African American women to network and gain support for their business ventures. She accompanied Atlanta Mayor HistoryMaker Andrew Young and travel agency owner Freddie Scarborough Henderson on a trade mission abroad to observe opportunities for African American business owners. Bussey also worked to raise money for Reverend Leon Sullivan's Opportunities Industrialization Centers and provide training for Atlanta small business owners. Bussey describes her participation in the National Florist Association, an organization for African American florists, and the importance of her husband, children, and community. Bussey also reflects upon her life, career and hopes for the future.

Video Oral History Interview with Alice Bussey, Section  
A2006\_028\_001\_006, TRT: 0:15:10 2006/02/20

Alice Bussey and her husband, James Bussey, Jr., have three children, Prez Bussey, James Bussey III, and Alicia Bussey. Bussey describes the impact of the Civil Rights Movement and her core values, which include education and religion. Bussy also shares lessons from her life, how she would like to be remembered and her hopes and concerns for the African American community. She concludes the interview by reflecting upon her legacy.