

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine

---

## 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>	Little Anthony, 1940-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine,
<b>Dates:</b>	April 6, 2007
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2007
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:07:52).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Singer Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine (1941 - ) was the lead vocalist for the group, Little Anthony & the Imperials. Some of the group's hits included "Shimmy, Shimmy, Ko-Ko-Bop" and "Goin' Out of My Head." Gourdine was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on April 6, 2007, in Las Vegas, Nevada. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2007_127
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

---

## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Singer Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine was born on January 8, 1941, to Victoria Stafford and Thomas Elliot Gourdine. He grew up in the Fort Greene Housing Project in Brooklyn, New York, and attended Boys High School. While in high school, Gourdine and his friends created a doo-wop group called, "The Duponts."

In 1957, Gourdine joined a new group called the, The Chesters, as the lead vocalist. The group recorded, "Tears on My Pillow," which became an instant success. The Chesters, changed their name to Little Anthony & The Imperials, in 1959, and released their second hit single, "Shimmy, Shimmy, Ko-Ko-Bop," which sold one million records.

Little Anthony & the Imperials reformed under DCP records in 1964. From 1964 through 1967, Little Anthony & The Imperials achieved success with songs like, "I'm Outside Looking In," "Goin' Out of My Head," and "Hurt So Bad." They appeared on the "The Ed Sullivan Show," the "Kraft Music Hall Television Show," and Dick Clark's television specials. In 1969, Little Anthony & The Imperials signed with United Artists and recorded several chart singles. Gourdine left the group in 1975 to begin a sixteen year long acting and solo singing career.

Little Anthony & The Imperials performed their first reunion show in 1992, in New York City, New York. Over the years, they have had seventeen pop and twelve R&B chart hits.

Gourdine now resides in Las Vegas, Nevada with his wife, Linda.

Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on April 6, 2007.

---

## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine was conducted by Denise Gines on April 6, 2007, in Las Vegas, Nevada, and was recorded on 7 Betacame SP videocassettes. Singer Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine (1941 - ) was the lead vocalist for the group, Little Anthony & the Imperials. Some of the group's hits included "Shimmy, Shimmy, Ko-Ko-Bop" and "Goin' Out of My Head."

---

## 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:

Little Anthony, 1940-

Gines, Denise (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Little Anthony, 1940---Interviews

---

African American entertainers--Interviews.

---

African American entertainers.

---

African American singers--Interviews.

---

African American singers.

---

Little Anthony, 1940-

---

## Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

---

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

---

## Occupations:

Singer

---

## HistoryMakers® Category:

MusicMakers

---

## 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 Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine, April 6, 2007. 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).

---

## 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 Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine, Section A2007\_127\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:16 ?

Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine was born on January 8, 1941 in New York City to Elizabeth Stafford Gourdine and Thomas Gourdine. His maternal great-grandfather was a deacon and a singer. Gourdine's mother and her four sisters were born in Savannah, Georgia, and migrated to New York City after the death of their mother, whose father's land was usurped by whites. Gourdine's father was born in Charleston, South Carolina, and moved with his family to New York City's Harlem community, where he met Gourdine's mother. During World War II, Gourdine's family relocated to Brooklyn, where they lived in the Fort Greene housing development, near the Brooklyn Navy Yard where his father worked. Gourdine grew up in a close-knit community, and his group of friends included many Italian and Jewish children. At P.S. 67, Charles A. Dorsey School, Gourdine was influenced by music teacher Ethel Mannix, who, along with Gourdine's aunt, discovered his vocal talent. Gourdine had three brothers, two of whom were also musicians.

African American families--New York (State)--New York.

African American children--New York (State)--New York.

Fort Greene (New York, N.Y.).

Neighborhoods--United States.

African American parents--New York (State)--New York.

Video Oral History Interview with Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine, Section A2007\_127\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:48 ?

Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine grew up in Brooklyn, New York. His mother, Elizabeth Stafford Gourdine, worked at the Abraham and Straus department store in New York City; and his father, Thomas Gourdine, began his four-decade career at a fur and textile company after the end of World War II. Gourdine's family attended a Baptist church in Harlem, where he sang publicly for the first time. Gourdine was introverted, and mostly expressed himself through music. His mother wanted him to attend the High School of Music and Art, but Gourdine instead enrolled at Brooklyn's Boys High School. There, he was invited to join classmate William Dockerty's singing group, the Duponts, along with William Bracy and William Delk. The group performed at New York City's Paramount Theatre, and recorded an album with Paul Winley Records, Inc. During this time, Gourdine's mother enrolled him at Star Time Studios, where he was introduced to pop music. Gourdine was also briefly involved in Brooklyn's gang culture.

African American churches--New York (State)--New York.

African American high school students--New York (State)--New York.

Duponts (Musical group).

African American parents--New York (State)--New York.

Boys' High School (Brooklyn, New York, N.Y.).

Video Oral History Interview with Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine, Section A2007\_127\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:33 ?

Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine and three of his classmates from Boys High School in Brooklyn, New York formed the Duponts singing group in the 1950s.

At local contests, The Duponts competed against Clarence Collins' group, The Chesters. Soon, Gourdine joined The Chesters, and Richard Barrett and George Goldner offered them a contract with End Records. While in summer school in 1957, Gourdine heard The Chesters' song, 'Tears on My Pillow,' on the radio for the first time, and left school before picking up his diploma. At this time, disc jockey Alan Freed began promoting the group, which was renamed Little Anthony and the Imperials. They were the first black singing group to appear on television programs like 'Your Hit Parade' and the 'Today Show.' While touring, Gourdine left home for the first time, and met performers like LaVern Baker and Bo Diddley, who taught him about show business. The group's lineup changed when Tracy Lord and Nathaniel Rodgers left in 1960, and when Sammy Strain joined in 1962.

African American entertainers.

Doo-wop (Music).

African American singers.

Little Anthony & the Imperials.

Video Oral History Interview with Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine, Section A2007\_127\_001\_004, TRT: 0:29:36 ?

Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine was the lead singer of The Chesters, which became known as Little Anthony and the Imperials at the suggestion of disc jockey Alan Freed and promoter Lou Galley. Upon releasing 'Tears on My Pillow,' they performed at New York City's Apollo Theater, and on television shows like 'American Bandstand.' In 1960, the group recorded 'Shimmy Shimmy Ko-Ko Bop,' one of their biggest hits. In 1962, they were promoted on Murray the K's radio program, and Sammy Strain joined the group, which at that time included Gourdine, Clarence Collins and Ernest Wright, Jr. Strain later sang with The O'Jays. Eventually, Gourdine left to pursue acting, while the group toured the borscht circuit in the Catskill Mountains. They reunited when Collins contacted Gourdine to perform at the Town Hill club in Brooklyn, New York. At this time, the group began working with producers Don Costa and Teddy Randazzo, who gave them the song 'I'm On The Outside (Looking In).'

African American singers.

African American entertainers.

Doo-wop (Music).

African American musicians.

Video Oral History Interview with Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine, Section A2007\_127\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:12 ?

Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine toured with Little Anthony and the Imperials throughout the United States, including at the Municipal Auditorium in segregated Birmingham, Alabama. While appearing on such television programs as Ed Sullivan's 'Toast of the Town' and 'Shindig!', the group met performers like Aretha Franklin and Sly Stone. In 1969, Little Anthony and the Imperials signed a contract with United Artists Records. Around this time, one of their managers advised the group to forego touring with The Beatles, which hired The Chiffons instead. After Ernest Wright, Jr. and Sammy Strain left, the group consisted of Gourdine, Clarence Collins, Bobby Wade, Harold Jenkins and Tommy Bell. After they released 'I'm Falling in Love With You,' infighting prompted Gourdine leave the group. He moved to Los Angeles, California with his wife, Linda Duke Gourdine, to pursue acting. He also sang as a solo act in Las Vegas, Nevada. In the early 1990s, Little Anthony and the Imperials reunited in New York City.

African Americans--Marriage.

African American musicians.

Little Anthony & the Imperials.

Video Oral History Interview with Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine, Section  
A2007\_127\_001\_006, TRT: 0:29:16 ?

Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine met Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. while touring with Little Anthony and the Imperials in the 1960s. Although the group was not heavily involved in civil rights activism, they were subject to threats of violence while touring the segregated South, and Gourdine describes his experiences of racial discrimination in West Virginia, Tennessee and Georgia. However, he recalls that they rarely faced overt discrimination after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. At the time of the interview, Little Anthony and the Imperials had recently released an album featuring new songs as well as remixed versions of their classic hits, like 'Goin' Out of My Head,' 'Hurt So Bad' and 'Two People in the World.' Gourdine offers advice to aspiring musicians regarding the importance of hiring an attorney with knowledge of the entertainment industry. He also talks about his favorite musical artists, like rapper Jay-Z, and his mentors, including producer Don Costa.

Civil rights movements--United States--History--20th century.

United States--Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Racism--Southern States.

African Americans--Civil rights--History--20th century.

Foxx, Redd, 1922-1991.

Video Oral History Interview with Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine, Section  
A2007\_127\_001\_007, TRT: 0:14:11 ?

Jerome "Little Anthony" Gourdine reflects upon his legacy, and shares his advice to future generations. He concludes the interview by narrating his photographs.