Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Elder Bernice Albertine King

Overview of the Collection

Repository: The HistoryMakers®
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Creator: King, Bernice Albertine

Title: The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Elder Bernice Albertine King,

Dates: February 27, 2008

Bulk Dates: 2008

Physical Description: 4 Betacam SP videocassettes (1:54:57).

Abstract: Civic leader and minister Elder Bernice Albertine King (1963 - ) is the youngest daughter to the late civil rights leaders Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Coretta Scott King. King is a co-founder of Active Ministers Engaged in Nurturing (AMEN) and the Chair of the national advisory committee on National King Week College and University Student Conference on Kingian Nonviolence. She is also the author of a book titled "Hard Questions, Heart Answers: Sermons and Speeches". King was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 27, 2008, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.

Identification: A2008_032

Language: The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Elder Bernice Albertine King was born on March 28, 1963, in Atlanta, Georgia, the youngest daughter to the late civil rights leaders Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Coretta Scott King. King was only five years old when her father was assassinated in Memphis in 1968. Raised in Atlanta, King graduated from Douglass High School in 1981 and went on to earn her B.A. degree in psychology from Spelman College in 1985. In 1990, King was the first official graduate of a joint degree receiving her Masters of Divinity and J.D. degrees from Emory Candler School of Theology and Emory University Law School. She has also received an honorary Doctorate of Divinity degree from Wesley College.

King received her calling to the ministry at the age of seventeen. Shortly thereafter, in her mother’s stead, she gave an address advocating against the South African apartheid to the United Nations General Assembly in New York. In 1985 and again in 1986, King was arrested with her siblings while protesting against apartheid outside the Southern Christian Leadership Conference offices in Atlanta, an organization that her father founded.

While in graduate school, King was a student intern who participated in project STEP in one of Atlanta’s notorious housing projects, Perry Homes. The program connected the residents to employment. During that time, she also headed demonstrations at Emory University.

In 1988, King gave her trial sermon at Ebenezer Baptist Church where both her father and grandfather served as pastors. In 1990, she received her degrees from Emory University in the morning, and that evening she was ordained into the ministry. This day would also mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of her father’s assignation. King assisted the pulpit for a number of years before going to Greater Rising Star Baptist Church in 1992, where she
developed the praise team, women’s and youth ministry and the ministers-in-training program. King became assistant pastor in 1995. It was this year that she attended the inauguration of Nelson Mandela in South Africa.

King was privileged to serve as a law clerk in the Fulton County Juvenile Court system, under Judge Glenda Hatchett, who was Georgia's first African American chief presiding justice of a state court and the department head of one of the largest juvenile court systems in the country. During her tenure, King served as a rehabilitation-outreach coordinator and counseled teens that came through the juvenile court system. She has also served as a mentor to a group of fifth grade girls at an inner-city Atlanta elementary school. King became a member of the State Bar of Georgia in 1992.

King is a minister at New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Lithonia, Georgia, under the dynamic leadership of Bishop Eddie Long. In addition to being a speaker, orator and preacher, King has planned and organized numerous conferences, seminars and workshops for all walks of life. She has successfully coordinated women and family conferences as well as nonviolent conflict resolution conferences for college and university students. She has also conducted a class on race relations at Mississippi College in Jackson, Mississippi, and taught a year-long leadership development class.

King is a co-founder of Active Ministers Engaged in Nurturing (AMEN) and the Chair of the national advisory committee on National King Week College and University Student Conference on Kingian Nonviolence. She is also the author of a book titled "Hard Questions, Heart Answers: Sermons and Speeches"

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Elder Bernice Albertine King was conducted by Gines, Denise on February 27, 2008, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 4 Betacam SP videocassettes. Civic leader and minister Elder Bernice Albertine King (1963 - ) is the youngest daughter to the late civil rights leaders Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Coretta Scott King. King is a co-founder of Active Ministers Engaged in Nurturing (AMEN) and the Chair of the national advisory committee on National King Week College and University Student Conference on Kingian Nonviolence. She is also the author of a book titled "Hard Questions, Heart Answers: Sermons and Speeches".

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:

King, Bernice A.
Gines, Denise (Interviewer)
Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
King, Bernice A.--Interviews

African American women clergy--Interviews

African American women civil rights workers--Interviews

Women anti-apartheid activists--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

HistoryMakers® Category:

CivicMakers

ReligionMakers

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 Elder Bernice Albertine King, February 27, 2008.
Elder Bernice Albertine King slates her interview and lists her favorites. King’s mother Coretta was born in central Alabama in 1927 to Obadiah “Obie” Scott and Bernice McMurray Scott. Obie and Bernice were enterprising people who valued education and strong work ethics, which caused resentment and reprisal from some whites. Obie’s parents were Jeff and his first wife Cora Scott. Together they owned a 300 acre farm later inherited by Obie. Coretta’s siblings were Edythe and Obie Leonard. They did well in school. Coretta pursued music education degrees first at Antioch College and then the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston where she met King’s father, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Rev. King, Jr. was born in 1929 to Rev. King, Sr. and Alberta Williams King and was raised in a middle-class home in Atlanta. Rev. King, Jr. first learned of segregation when he was forbidden to play with a white neighbor after they entered separate elementary schools. Rev. King, Jr.’s assassination occurred when King was five and her mother became frequently absent as she toured and raised money for The King Center.

Elder Bernice King talks about her father, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. He was raised in Atlanta on Auburn Avenue where many black-owned businesses thrived. Revs. King, Sr. and Jr. lived with segregation but refused to accept it. King and her siblings relied on family and friends to look after them while their mother toured and raised money for The King Center. King frequently stayed with her aunt and uncle Willie “Christine” and Isaac Farris. King attended Ebenezer Baptist Church where her grandfather Rev. King, Sr. ministered and
her grandmother Alberta directed and played music. Alberta was murdered by a
deranged gunman in 1974. This latest death combined with King’s father
murder in 1968, and her uncle A.D.’s drowning in 1969, made King
psychologically unsettled before turning eleven years old. Rev. King, Jr.
attended Morehouse College at a young age. Crozer Theological Seminary and
Boston University followed. At Boston Rev. King, Jr. and Coretta Scott were
introduced and eventually married despite some initial reservations on Coretta’s
part.

Death--Psychological aspects.
King, Coretta Scott, 1927-2006.
King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968.
Family--History.
Assassination--United States.
Segregation--Georgia--Atlanta.
Ebenezer Baptist Church (Atlanta, Ga.)
African American families--Georgia--Atlanta.

Video Oral History Interview with Elder Bernice Albertine King, Section A2008_032_001_003,
TRT: 0:28:16 2008/02/27

Elder Bernice Albertine King talks about her grandfather, Rev. Martin Luther
King, Sr. He was born in Stockbridge, Georgia, the son of sharecroppers James
and Delia King. Young Martin’s intelligence got him and the family in trouble
with local whites and the family were compelled to leave. Rev. King, Jr. and
Coretta married on her family’s lawn and honeymooned on the second floor of
a funeral parlor in Marion, Alabama. King’s sister Yolanda Denise was born in
became an actress, Martin III worked in non-profit administration, and Dexter
did not attend college and worked various jobs including at a funeral parlor, a
prison, and The King Center. King developed no permanent memories of her
father and all stories of him were told to her.

Death--Psychological aspects.
King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968.
King, Coretta Scott, 1927-2006.
Family--History.
Assassination--United States.
Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Social Change
King, Martin Luther, III
Death and remembrance.
African American families--Georgia--Atlanta.

Video Oral History Interview with Elder Bernice Albertine King, Section A2008_032_001_004,
TRT: 0:29:02 2008/02/27

Elder Bernice Albertine King was too immature to understand the implications
and permanence of death and believed the playback of Rev. King, Jr.’s sermon
“The Drum Major Instinct” meant her father was alive again. King yearned for
a male figure but had many family friends and who were given honorifics like
“Uncle.” King had many male friends and played a variety of sports. She was
friends with the children of many prominent blacks in Atlanta. Most of the
King children enrolled in the predominately white Galloway School in 1969.
However, King and Dexter transferred to Frederick Douglas High School eight
years later. The King household was purchased in 1965 in Vine City, an
impoverished neighborhood. King’s mother Coretta was helped by cooks, tutors, handymen, drivers, and maids but the children had regular and rotating chores. King was mischievous with her relatives and played in the alleyway by their house.

Death--Psychological aspects.
King, Coretta Scott, 1927-2006.
King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968.
Family--History.
African American families--Georgia--Atlanta.