

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Karen Slade

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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>	Slade, Karen E., 1955-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Karen Slade,
<b>Dates:</b>	July 28, 2014
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2014
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 uncompressed MOV digital video files (2:05:31).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Radio station manager Karen Slade (1955 - ) was the vice president and general manager of Stevie Wonder's KJLH radio station in Los Angeles, California. Slade was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 28, 2014, in Inglewood, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2014_213
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Radio station manager Karen E. Slade was born on October 18, 1955 in Cleveland, Ohio to Violette Crawford and Charles Slade. In 1977, Slade earned her B.S. degree in telecommunications from Kent State University, where she was a member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. She went on to obtain her M.B.A. degree from Pepperdine University in 1991.

Upon graduation from Kent State University, Slade was hired as an account executive at Xerox Corporation in Cleveland, Ohio. For the next decade, she worked in various positions for Xerox, including as a marketing consultant,

project manager and dealer sales manager. In 1988, Slade was promoted to a regional sales manager in Atlanta, Georgia. Then, in 1989, she returned to Los Angeles, California to work as vice president and general manager of KJLH, the radio station owned by R&B artist Stevie Wonder. As general manager, Slade led programming and sales as well as the station's efforts to address local and national issues in the African American community. Under her leadership, KJLH Radio received the distinguished George Foster Peabody Award and the NAACP Image Award.

Slade has been honored by the California Legislative Black Caucus Foundation and the Black Business Association, and received the Phenomenal Woman Award from California State University, Northridge. *Radio Inc.* magazine named Slade one of the 25 most influential African Americans in radio. She served on the board of the Los Angeles Urban League from 1989 to 1995, and has been a member of the Black Media Network and the National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters since 1989.

Karen Slade was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on July 28, 2014.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Karen Slade was conducted by Larry Crowe on July 28, 2014, in Inglewood, California, and was recorded on 5 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Radio station manager Karen Slade (1955 - ) was the vice president and general manager of Stevie Wonder's KJLH radio station in Los Angeles, California.

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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

## 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:

Slade, Karen E., 1955-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Slade, Karen E., 1955---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:

## **HistoryMakers® Category:**

MediaMakers

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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 Karen Slade, July 28, 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 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 Karen Slade, Section  
A2014\_213\_001\_001, TRT: 1:28:30 2014/07/28

Karen Slade was born on October 18, 1955 in Cleveland, Ohio to Violette Edwards-McCowan and Charles Slade. Her maternal grandfather, Eugene Edwards, moved from Abbeville, South Carolina to Cleveland, Ohio, where he was employed at the U.S. Postal Service while her maternal grandmother, Mildred Brewer Edwards, was a homemaker. At night, Slade's grandfather worked as a coat checker with the Cleveland Orchestra. Due to complications from a severe stroke, Slade's mother struggled to provide for her and her three siblings, including Slade's twin brother, Kirk Slade. They were raised primarily by their maternal grandparents, although Slade maintained a relationship with her mother who went on to marry four times. She had little contact with her father who was originally from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, but later relocated to Cleveland. Slade grew up in Cleveland's Lee-Miles neighborhood, where she learned to play the piano and later joined the cheerleading team at Robert H. Jamison School.

Video Oral History Interview with Karen Slade, Section  
A2014\_213\_001\_002, TRT: 2:28:25 2014/07/28

Karen Slade began her education at Moses Cleaveland Elementary School in Cleveland, Ohio. With the encouragement of her maternal grandmother, Mildred Brewer Edwards, Slade excelled at reading and math. From there, she graduated to Robert H. Jamison School, where she enjoyed listening to The Supremes, and was an active cheerleader. After graduating from John F. Kennedy High School in 1973, Slade received a scholarship to attend Kent State University in Kent, Ohio. Inspired by Cleveland anchor Dorothy Fuldheim, she decided to major in telecommunications, and worked on the student cable show Family Tree, where she interviewed civil rights activist Angela Davis. During her senior year, she interned at WKYC Radio in Cleveland. Slade also joined the cheerleading team, and pledged Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. Unable to find work in her preferred field, Slade worked in sales at Randall Park Mall before joining Xerox

Corporation. She remembers her early acquaintance with Cleveland natives Arsenio Hall and Steve Harvey.

Video Oral History Interview with Karen Slade, Section  
A2014\_213\_001\_003, TRT: 3:29:28 2014/07/28

Karen Slade relocated to the Xerox Corporation offices in Los Angeles, California in 1979, one year after the death of her twin brother Kirk Slade. Through the mentorship of her supervisor, Chris Floyd, and the Los Angeles Black Employees of Xerox professional association, Slade was trained extensively on sales protocol, and was soon recognized for exceeding her target. In 1988, she was promoted to regional sales manager in Atlanta, Georgia. There, she became reacquainted with her friend Stevie Wonder, who offered her the general manager position at his R and B station, KJLH Radio, in Los Angeles. While there, Slade developed standard operating procedures, and advised on programming, which focused on local disc jockeys and public affairs shows. Additionally, Slade talks about the origins of KJLH Radio's call letters as well as upgrading the station's radio signal and the changes in the radio ratings system. She also describes the station's listenership and local competitors like KPWR Radio and KKBT Radio.

Video Oral History Interview with Karen Slade, Section  
A2014\_213\_001\_004, TRT: 4:28:43 2014/07/28

Karen Slade began working at KJLH Radio in Los Angeles, California in 1989. In 1992, her radio staff received a George Foster Peabody Award for their coverage of the Rodney King trial and the subsequent riots. At this point, Slade talks about the Los Angeles Police Department's history of violence and racial discrimination. As the general manager of KJLH Radio, Slade's responsibilities included overseeing sales operations. She worked closely with KJLH Radio owner, Stevie Wonder, to create the We Are You Foundation, which helped provide toiletries and monetary support to victims of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The station also participated in Martin Luther King, Jr. Day celebrations in Los Angeles. In addition, Slade talks about radio competitors in Los Angeles, and the importance of radio ownership and management amongst African Americans.

At this point in the interview, Slade reflects upon her life, and talks about the future of KJLH Radio as well as her personal plans for the future.

Video Oral History Interview with Karen Slade, Section  
A2014\_213\_001\_005, TRT: 5:10:25 2014/07/28

Karen Slade was the general manager of KJLH Radio in Los Angeles, California for over twenty-five years. During that time, she developed an internship program, and worked with individuals like news director Carl Nelson and financial controller Zellie D. Hudson, III. She also talks about her personal network of coworkers and close friends; and describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community. Slade concludes the interview by reflecting upon her legacy and how she would like to be remembered.