

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Kathleen Bertrand

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Bertrand, Kathleen, 1951-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Kathleen Bertrand,
Dates:	October 3, 2016
Bulk Dates:	2016
Physical Description:	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:31:39).
Abstract:	Jazz singer and nonprofit executive Kathleen Bertrand (1952 -) worked at the Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau for thirty-two years. She also released five jazz albums, and penned the national theme song for the 100 Black Men of America, Inc. Bertrand was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 3, 2016, in Atlanta, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2016_048
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Jazz singer and nonprofit executive Kathleen Bertrand was born on October 17, 1951 in Atlanta, Georgia to Nan Jackson and William Jackson. Bertrand graduated from Henry W. Grady High School in 1969, and earned her B.S. degree in English from Spelman College in 1973.

From 1974 to 1978, Bertrand worked as Spelman College's director of alumni affairs. In 1983, Bertrand became a membership account executive for the Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau (ACVB), a private, non-profit organization. Later, she became the organization's advertising and membership manager before becoming ACVB's vice president of membership and community affairs in 1990. In this position, Bertrand launched a number of projects in Atlanta, including: Diversity in the Hospitality Industry Summit, the Hospitality Student Summit and ACVB's Diversity Marketing Advisory Council. She also developed *Atlanta Heritage*, an annual visitor's guide targeted at African American tourists. Bertrand became senior vice president of community and government affairs at ACVB; and in 2007, founded Hospitality Industry Professionals, a networking organization for those of diverse hospitality backgrounds.

An accomplished singer, Bertrand performed at the 1992, 1994 and 1996 Olympic Games. In 1999, she independently released her first jazz album, *All of Me*. Then, in 2002, she penned the national theme song, "What They See is What They'll Be" for the 100 Black Men of America, Inc. That same year, Bertrand recorded her second album, *No Regrets*, which was released by Gold Circle Records, followed by her third album, *Reasons for the Season*. In 2006, she recorded her fourth album, *New Standards*. Then, in 2009, Bertrand co-founded the BronzeLens Film Festival of Atlanta. BronzeLens was a founding partner of Ava DuVernay's African American Film Festival Releasing Movement. Bertrand released her fifth album, *Katharsis*, in 2011. Bertrand has opened for a number of performers, including: Tony Bennett, Ray Charles, Rachele Ferrell and Roy Ayers. Additionally, she performed the National Anthem for several of Atlanta's professional sports teams, as well as for former Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

Bertrand served on the Grady Hospitality Academy Industry Advisory Board, the MACOC Education Committee, the Advisory Board for North Atlanta High School Hospitality Program, the Tourism and Hospitality Advisory Committee of Atlanta Technical College, the Black Women's Film Network, and the Atlanta Community Food Bank. She was recognized as the *Atlanta Business Chronicle's* Top Hospitality Industry Leader, one of Atlanta's Top 100 Black Women of Influence by the Atlanta Business League, and as the Most Influential African Americans in the Meetings & Tourism Industry by *Black Meetings & Tourism Magazine*. Bertrand and her husband, Andre Bertrand, have four children: Ikechi, Amichi, Chioma, and Chinela.

Kathleen Bertrand was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on October 3, 2016.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Kathleen Bertrand was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 3, 2016, in Atlanta, Georgia, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Jazz singer and nonprofit executive Kathleen Bertrand (1952 -) worked at the Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau for thirty-two years. She also released five jazz albums, and penned the national theme song for the 100 Black Men of America, Inc.

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:

Bertrand, Kathleen, 1951-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Bertrand, Kathleen, 1951- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Nonprofit 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 Kathleen Bertrand, October 3, 2016. 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 Kathleen Bertrand, Section A2016_048_001_001, TRT: 1:31:18

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Kathleen Bertrand was born on October 17, 1951 in Atlanta, Georgia to Nan Gibson Jackson and William Jackson. Her maternal grandmother, Lula Gibson, was born in South Carolina, and worked as a laundress and maid. Her son, Bertrand's maternal uncle Sloan Gibson, became a Pullman porter. Bertrand's paternal grandmother, Hattie Finley Jackson, was a singer who toured the Baptist churches near Athens, Georgia. Bertrand's parents first met in Athens, and reconnected years later in Atlanta. Her father was a barber, and passed away when Bertrand was six years old. Bertrand began her education at the Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School in Atlanta, and attended the Liberty Baptist Church under pastors George W. Dudley and Melvin H. Watson. She was mentored by Lynette Saine Gaines and Betty Wilson Durden, who were both alumnae of Spelman College. At sixteen years old, Bertrand was chosen as a finalist in the national Superteen singing contest.

Video Oral History Interview with Kathleen Bertrand, Section A2016_048_001_002, TRT: 2:29:08

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Kathleen Bertrand studied music at the Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School in Atlanta, Georgia. She performed with the school choir, and sang at special events like the third grade play. After class, she took the school bus downtown, where she transferred to the segregated public bus. At this point, Bertrand remembers the integration of Atlanta's public transit system in 1959, when she was in the second grade. Bertrand went on to attend Atlanta's Henry W. Grady High School. She was in the same class as Yolanda King, the daughter of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. At sixteen years old, Bertrand won in the national Superteen singing contest with her rendition of 'The Look of Love.' Her prize included a car, a color television set and a recording contract with Capitol Records. Bertrand decided not to sign the contract, as the company's regional producer, Bill Lowery, wanted her to sing pop instead of jazz. Bertrand also remembers the impact of Dr. King's assassination on Atlanta's Fourth Ward community.

Video Oral History Interview with Kathleen Bertrand, Section A2016_048_001_003, TRT: 3:29:02

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Kathleen Bertrand attended Henry W. Grady High School in Atlanta, Georgia, where she was a member of the honor society and the National Beta Club. After graduating, she enrolled at Atlanta's Spelman College. She initially studied mathematics, and was encouraged by black investment banker T.M. Alexander, Jr., but changed her major to English after struggling to learn calculus. During college, Bertrand became a disc jockey on WAUC Radio, which broadcast from the Atlanta University Center. She also performed with the Morehouse College Jazz Ensemble under the direction of Dr. William T. McDaniel. In 1971, Bertrand was crowned Miss Maroon and White by Morehouse College. Bertrand also recorded commercial jingles at Atlanta Doppler Studios. In 1972, Bertrand graduated from Spelman College. She moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin to work for the Koehring Company, and returned to Atlanta after one year. With help from Spelman College President Albert E. Manley, Bertrand secured a position in the college alumnae office.

Video Oral History Interview with Kathleen Bertrand, Section A2016_048_001_004, TRT: 4:29:51

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Kathleen Bertrand served as the director of alumnae affairs at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. In this role, she created the Alumnae Global Travel Program

and the Sister 2 Sister Professional Mentoring Program. In the late 1970s, Bertrand saw Roy Ayers in concert at Alex Cooley's Electric Ballroom. They spoke backstage, and she was offered a chance to tour with him. After a year of vocal training, Bertrand joined Ayers' band in 1979. While performing at the Atlanta Jazz Festival, she reconnected with Andre Bertrand, whom she first met in the Morehouse College photography club. They married in 1980, and moved to the island of St. Croix. There, Bertrand performed with a local band called Onyx, and gave birth to her first son, Ikechi Bertrand. In 1983, Bertrand returned to Atlanta, and learned that the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACVB) was recruiting African American employees. She secured an interview using her connections at Spelman College.

Video Oral History Interview with Kathleen Bertrand, Section A2016_048_001_005, TRT: 5:31:24
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Kathleen Bertrand began her career at the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACVB) as advertising account executive. For a short time, Bertrand lived in Atlanta, Georgia with her mother and infant son, Nan Gibson Jackson and Ikechi Bertrand, while her husband, Andre Bertrand, managed their farm on St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands. At ACVB, Bertrand was promoted to advertising and membership manager, and created the Diversity in the Hospitality Industry Summit. She also organized a summit to help students learn about careers in the hospitality industry, and formed a diversity marketing council. She proposed creating a travel guide for visitors to Atlanta's black community, which was published under the name Atlanta Heritage for over twenty-five years. Bertrand's gospel rendition of 'Amazing Grace' was featured in an advertisement for the 1996 Summer Olympics, which were hosted in Atlanta. During the games, she performed live at Centennial Olympic Park on the day that the park was bombed.

Video Oral History Interview with Kathleen Bertrand, Section A2016_048_001_006, TRT: 6:28:22
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Kathleen Bertrand helped organize the 1996 Summer Olympic Games through her work at the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACVB). After the games, the City of Atlanta continued to use venues like Centennial Olympic Park, which bolstered the local economy. In 1999, Bertrand released her first solo album, 'All of Me.' Soon after, she signed a contract with Atlanta's Gold Circle Records, where she recorded 'No Regrets.' The label closed after the global financial downturn of 2011. Bertrand went on to release an album called 'Reasons for the Season,' which included jazz interpretations of traditional Christmas hymns. In 2007, Bertrand was promoted to senior vice president of the ACVB. She also founded Hospitality Industry Professionals Atlanta, which funded the Kathleen Bertrand Student Scholarship. In 2010, Bertrand worked with ACVB CEO William Tate to organize the inaugural BronzeLens Film Festival, which celebrated black filmmakers and digital content creators like Issa Rae.

Video Oral History Interview with Kathleen Bertrand, Section A2016_048_001_007, TRT: 7:32:34
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Kathleen Bertrand released her fifth studio album, 'Katharsis,' in 2011. The record was a success on online radio platforms, and was listed at the top of the UK Soul Chart for nearly two months. One of the tracks, 'Date Night,' was inspired by President Barack Obama's stories about dating First Lady Michelle Obama. Bertrand performed at several inauguration ceremonies for 100 Black Men of America, Inc. She wrote 'What They See Is What They'll Be' for Thomas W. Dortch, Jr.'s inauguration, and later included on the song on her

album 'New Standards.' Bertrand reflects upon her career at the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau. She talks about her use of social media and her upcoming projects, including a new CD and a series of children's stories. She describes her concerns for the African American community, including unemployment and the prevalence of discriminatory policing. Bertrand reflects upon her legacy, and concludes the interview by singing a verse of 'What They See Is What They'll Be.'