

# Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Claudette Robinson

PERSON

Robinson, Claudette

**Alternative Names:** Claudette Robinson;

**Life Dates:** June 20, 1938-

**Place of Birth:** New Orleans, Louisiana, USA

**Residence:** Beverly Hills, CA

**Occupations:** Singer

## Biographical Note

Singer and songwriter Claudette Robinson was born on June 20, 1938 in New Orleans, Louisiana and later moved with her family to Detroit, Michigan in 1950. She graduated from Commerce High School in Detroit at the age of fifteen and enrolled at Wayne State University, before joining the U.S. Marine Corps.

In her teen years, she sang in the female group The Matadorettes. While her brother, Sonny Rogers was away serving in the U.S. Army, Claudette met his friend and band mate Smokey Robinson of The Matadors. Robinson joined the group in her brothers' absence, which was renamed The Miracles. She sang with Ronnie White, Pete Moore, Marv Tarplin, and Smokey Robinson, her husband. Together, the group created the first hit single for Motown Records, "Shop Around," which sold millions of copies. The Miracles would later be known for a variety of songs, including "You've Really Got a Hold on Me," "Mickey's Monkey," "I Second That Emotion," "Baby Baby Don't Cry," and "The Tears of a Clown." The song "The Tears of a Clown" was the group's most popular single, selling over three million copies all over the world. Although Robinson left the group in 1964, she continued to sing back-up vocals for the group until 1972. That year, her husband, Smokey Robinson, left The Miracles to pursue his solo career. Robinson eventually rejoined The Miracles and performed with the group until 2013, when her cousin, Bobby Rogers, passed away.

After leaving The Miracles, Robinson became active in numerous community organizations, including the HAL Awards and the Rhythm and Blues Foundation, which was dedicated to the preservation of R&B music. Robinson has been nationally recognized for her contributions to R&B music through her work with The Miracles. In 2009, she received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Robinson was also inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2012, along with the rest of the members of The

Miracles. As the only woman in the first band signed to Motown Records, she is often referred to as the first lady of Motown by its founder, Berry Gordy.

Robinson has two children, Berry William Borope Robinson and Tamla Claudette Robinson.

Claudette Robinson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on July 22, 2017.

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