

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Kenny Gamble

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Gamble, Kenny
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Kenny Gamble,
Dates:	September 7, 2002
Bulk Dates:	2002
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:31:00).
Abstract:	Lyricist Kenny Gamble (1943 -) is part of the songwriting team of Gamble and Huff and an originator of the "Philadelphia sound." Gamble was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on September 7, 2002, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2002_183
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Singer, songwriter, and producer, Kenny Gamble, was born on August 11, 1943, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Gamble got his start in the music industry in the early 1960s as a member of a band called the Romeos. From performing, Gamble eventually switched to song writing and producing alongside colleague Leon Huff; the partnership lasted over three decades. Through song writing, Gamble explored the themes of social change and empowerment of inner city inhabitants. Gamble and Huff became known for originating the Philly Soul Sound, a popular genre of the 1970s. Gamble and Huff's hits include: "Expressway to Your Heart," "Only the Strong Survive," "Me and Mrs. Jones," "If You Don't Know Me By Now," "Back Stabbers," "Love Train" and "Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now."

In the 1970s, Gamble began to purchase run-down houses, beginning with his own childhood home, to improve conditions in blighted areas. By the early 1990s, Gamble had purchased over one hundred abandoned homes; he and his wife then moved from the suburbs back into the inner city neighborhood in South Philadelphia where he had grown up in order to help rebuild the community.

Gamble founded the nonprofit Universal Companies to establish a workforce development center offering adult education and job training to individuals of all skill levels; a construction company to provide training and jobs; a business support center; a charter school; and other entities aimed at empowering the inner city and its residents. Gamble also founded a nonprofit community development corporation, Universal Community Homes, to provide low- and moderate-income families in Philadelphia with freshly-built or refurbished homes at affordable prices. The community revitalization programs Gamble launched and nurtured created hundreds of jobs; well over one hundred and twenty homes that have been constructed or renovated; and developed over 70,000 square feet of commercial space to support local needs. Gamble received various awards and honors for his work and dedication to the community.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Kenny Gamble was conducted by Larry Crowe on September 7, 2002, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Lyricist Kenny Gamble (1943 -) is part of the songwriting team of Gamble and Huff and an originator of the "Philadelphia sound."

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:

Gamble, Kenny

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Bieschke, Paul (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Gamble, Kenny--Interviews

Community activists--Interviews

African American musicians--Interviews

Sound recordings--Production and direction

Slavery--United States

United States--Race relations

Community policing--United States

Gang prevention--United States

Community life--United States

African Americans--Social conditions

African Americans--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia--Social life and customs

South Philadelphia (Philadelphia, Pa.)--Social life and customs

American Bandstand (Television program)

Popular music--United States

Composers

African American composers--Interviews

Hip hop culture--United States

Music and society--United States

African Americans--Religion

Spirituality--United States

Urban renewal--United States

African Americans--Genealogy

Music trade--United States--Biography

African Americans--Music

Sound recording industry--United States

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Lyricist

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 Kenny Gamble, September 7, 2002. 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 Kenny Gamble, Section A2002_183_001_001, TRT: 0:30:45 ?

Composer and songwriter Kenny Gamble shares what he knows about his family background and his childhood in South Philadelphia. Gamble ponders the legacy of slavery and the meaning of ancestry to African Americans, saying that many blacks have used their creativity to fill the holes in their ancestry. Gamble details

the African American community in which he grew up, describing attempts by community leaders to stop gang hostility.

Community activists--Interviews.

African American musicians--Interviews.

Sound recordings--Production and direction.

Slavery--United States.

United States--Race relations.

Community policing--United States.

Gang prevention--United States.

Community life--United States.

African Americans--Social conditions.

African Americans--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia--Social life and customs.

South Philadelphia (Philadelphia, Pa.)--Social life and customs.

American Bandstand (Television program).

Popular music--United States.

Composers.

African American composers--Interviews.

Hip hop culture--United States.

Music--Social aspects.

African Americans--Religion.

Spirituality--United States.

Urban renewal--United States.

African Americans--Genealogy.

Music trade--United States--Biography.

African Americans--Music.

Sound recording industry--United States.

Video Oral History Interview with Kenny Gamble, Section A2002_183_001_002, TRT: 0:29:25 ?

Composer and songwriter Kenny Gamble further describes the neighborhood of his youth, South Philadelphia. Gamble recalls his creativity early in life, and explains how he was drawn to music. Gamble talks about some of the early groups he performed in, and names many talented musicians from South Philadelphia. Gamble also discusses the popularity of 'American Bandstand', and details the program's racial discrimination.

Video Oral History Interview with Kenny Gamble, Section A2002_183_001_003, TRT: 0:29:45 ?

Composer and songwriter Kenny Gamble discusses the beginning of his musical career. Gamble describes the various 'day jobs' he held prior to achieving success in the music business, including stints as a medical technician and a record store owner. Gamble talks about meeting Philadelphia icon Benny Krass, who helped Gamble start recording his songs in a professional studio. Gamble then describes his feelings about his first three radio hits, one of which became a Top 40 success.

Video Oral History Interview with Kenny Gamble, Section A2002_183_001_004, TRT: 0:30:05 ?

Composer and songwriter Kenny Gamble goes into great depth about the great success he has achieved during his career in music. Gamble discusses many of the major hit songs he wrote with collaborator Leon Huff, and names the inspirations behind the Philadelphia Sound. Gamble goes into detail about the positive messages he and Huff tried to communicate with their music, and

explains how he has put these messages into practice with his community revitalization project, Universal Companies. Gamble also has discussions about the impact of FM radio on popular music and the impact of hip-hop.

Video Oral History Interview with Kenny Gamble, Section A2002_183_001_005, TRT: 0:31:00 ?

Composer and songwriter Kenny Gamble reflects on the problems facing the African American community and outlines his actions to deal with these problems. In the course of this discussion, Gamble names his major spiritual and creative influences, and ponders the nature of humanity and spirituality. Gamble says he always tried to connect a positive message to his music, and hopes that future generations will be inspired to effect change.