

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Melvin "Kip" Holden

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## Overview of the Collection

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| <b>Repository:</b>           | The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616<br>info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com   |
| <b>Creator:</b>              | Holden, Melvin, 1952-   |
| <b>Title:</b>                | The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Melvin "Kip" Holden,   |
| <b>Dates:</b>                | March 26, 2008  |
| <b>Bulk Dates:</b>           | 2008  |
| <b>Physical Description:</b> | 4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:57:10).   |
| <b>Abstract:</b>             | Mayor The Honorable Melvin "Kip" Holden (1952 - ) is the first African American mayor-president of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He is a former Louisiana State Representative and served as an adjunct professor of law at the Southern University Law Center. Holden was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 26, 2008, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview. |
| <b>Identification:</b>       | A2008_062   |
| <b>Language:</b>             | The interview and records are in English.   |

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Mayor Melvin L. "Kip" Holden was born on August 12, 1952, in New Orleans, Louisiana to Rosa May Rogers and Curtis Holden. In 1970, he graduated from Scotlandville Senior High School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and went on to graduate with his B.A. degree in journalism from Louisiana State University Manship School of Mass Communications in 1974. Afterwards, he decided to pursue a career in radio broadcasting and was hired as news director for WXOK Radio in Baton Rouge. He later relocated to New Orleans where he served as a reporter for WWL Radio. He then began a career in television broadcasting by becoming a reporter for WBRZ Channel 2 in Baton Rouge in 1978. During that time, Holden furthered his education by earning his M.A. degree in journalism from Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in 1982.

Holden worked as a relations specialist for the United States Census Bureau; a Public Information Officer for the Baton Rouge City Police Department; and a Law Clerk for the Louisiana Department of Labor Office of Workers' Compensation. In 1984, he was elected as District "2" Councilman of the Baton Rouge Metro Council, beginning his successful career in Louisiana politics. Then in 1985, he graduated with his J.D. degree from Southern University Law Center.

In 1988, Holden was elected as a state representative for the Louisiana House of Representatives. Later, in 1991, he became an adjunct professor of Law at his alma mater, the Southern University Law Center. He went on to graduate from the National Institute of Trial Advocacy in 1998, and in 2001, he was elected to complete the remaining term for Sen. W. Fields. Melvin recognized as an effective and remarkable leader, in 2002, Holden was invited to study at the Oxford University Round Table in England to discuss issues that affect the public good in all its various forms and ramifications.

In 2004, Holden was elected the First African American Mayor-President of East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana. As mayor, he enacted many policies that have redefined the East Baton Rouge Parish. These policies include the “Green Light Baton Rouge Citizens Council,” dedicated to the revitalization of Downtown Baton Rouge. He also established an HIV/AIDS task force devoted to the education, prevention and awareness campaign concerning the transmission of HIV/AIDS in East Baton Rouge Parish and surrounding areas and launched a new Economic Development Initiative for East Baton Rouge Parish aimed at empowering minority businesses in the region.

Holden was a leading figure in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. He led efforts to aid many evacuees that sought refuge in Baton Rouge. He addressed the United States Senate in his own efforts to seek additional federal funding to combat the destruction of Hurricane Katrina. Holden has received numerous awards including: the Louisiana Chapter Distinguished Leadership Award from the American Planning Association; the Military Order of the Purple Heart Distinguished Service Award and the National Conference of Black Mayors Valiant Award for Balanced Government.

Melvin L. “Kip” Holden was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on March 26, 2008.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with The Honorable Melvin "Kip" Holden was conducted by Larry Crowe on March 26, 2008, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Mayor The Honorable Melvin "Kip" Holden (1952 - ) is the first African American mayor-president of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He is a former Louisiana State Representative and served as an adjunct professor of law at the Southern University Law Center.

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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 HistoryMakers®.

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## 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:

Holden, Melvin, 1952-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Holden, Melvin, 1952- --Interviews

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African American mayors--Louisiana--Baton Rouge--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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Baton Rouge (La.)

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## Occupations:

Mayor

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

PoliticalMakers

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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 The Honorable Melvin "Kip" Holden, March 26, 2008. 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).

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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 The Honorable Melvin "Kip" Holden, Section  
A2008\_062\_001\_001, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Melvin Lee "Kip" Holden was born on August 12, 1952 in New Orleans, Louisiana to Rosa May Rogers Holden and Curtis Holden. Rosa May Rogers was born on April 28, 1930 in Woodville, Mississippi. Holden's mother attended Wilkinson County Training School in Woodville, Mississippi and then moved to Baton Rouge, Louisiana to attend McKinley High School until the 10th grade. Education was not an option for her because working in the fields was mandatory. Holden's father, Curtis Holden was born on December 9, 1919 in Liberty, Mississippi. His father was the son of a prominent Baptist minister, Reverend John Holden. Holden discusses the origin of his nickname "Kip." He ran track in high school and was given the nickname "Kip" after the Kenyan track and field athlete and two-time Olympic gold medalist, Kipchoge "Kip" Keino. Holden ends the interview by describing his work experience at the Baton Rouge, Louisiana airport.

African American families--Louisiana--New Orleans.

African American children--Louisiana--New Orleans.

African American parents.

African Americans--Mississippi--Social conditions.

African American Baptists.

African American high school students--Louisiana.

High school athletes.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Melvin "Kip" Holden, Section  
A2008\_062\_001\_002, TRT: 0:29:10 ?

Melvin Lee "Kip" Holden's discusses growing up in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Church was an essential part of Holden's upbringing. He attended Greater King David Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Holden discusses his school experiences and political involvement and in junior high school, much of Holden's life centered around politics. During the summer months of 1969 and 1970, Governor John McKeithen hired Holden and Sam Thomas to work as the first two African American pages in the Baton Rouge, Louisiana legislature since Reconstruction. Holden describes the civil rights movement in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and how the blueprint for the Montgomery Bus Boycott originated in Baton Rouge. Holden describes his participation in school sports. Holden ends the interview segment by talking about the evolution of prejudice and how African Americans today take their voting rights for granted.

African American families--Louisiana--Baton Rouge.

African American churches--Louisiana--Baton Rouge.

African American students--Education (Elementary)--Louisiana--Baton Rouge.

Civil rights movements--Louisiana--History--20th century.

African American children--Social conditions.

Montgomery Bus Boycott, Montgomery, Ala., 1955-1956.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Melvin "Kip" Holden, Section  
A2008\_062\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:20 ?

Melvin Lee "Kip" Holden discusses how he graduated from high school in 1970 and was encouraged to attend journalism school at Northeast Louisiana University in Monroe, Louisiana. He attended for one year, but his commute between Monroe and Baton Rouge was difficult. In 1966, Louisiana State University started admitting African American students for the first time and it was not unusual to see Ku Klux Klan members on his commute to college. In the middle of the semester, he transferred to Louisiana State University and graduated in 1974. Music was a essential part of Holden's life. Holden was a campus disc jockey for WXOK and WLSU radio playing R&B music. He became the music director of WXOK radio until 1977. Holden ends this segment of the interview by discussing the effects of his mother's death on his matriculation in law school.

African Americans--Education (Higher)--Louisiana--Baton Rouge.

Northeast Louisiana University--Students.

African Americans--Music.

Ku Klux Klan (1915-).

Louisiana State University (Baton Rouge, La.)--Students.

African American radio broadcasters.

Death of parents.

Video Oral History Interview with The Honorable Melvin "Kip" Holden, Section  
A2008\_062\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:20 ?

Melvin Lee "Kip" Holden discusses his stint at the WXOK radio station in New Orleans, Louisiana. He was the only reporter who received an exclusive interview with President Gerald R. Ford, Jr. After working for a year in New Orleans, Holden returned to Baton Rouge to become a street reporter for WBRZ Channel 2. Holden discusses how his manager wanted him to interview Bill Wilkerson, a leader of the Ku Klux Klan. He also discusses his experiences at Southern University Law School. During law school, he worked as a law clerk and was elected to Baton Rouge City Council. As a city council member, he started the first computer literacy program in East Baton Rouge Parish. In 1988, he was elected to the state legislature and passed the Air Toxic Bill. Holden ends the interview by discussing how he started teaching at Southern University in 1991. Hadley has a personal goal of eradicating poverty in his community.

African American law students--Louisiana.

African American politicians--Louisiana.

African American radio broadcasters.

Ku Klux Klan (1915-).

Southern University and A & M College--Students.

Baton Rouge (La.)--Government.

African Americans--Education (Higher)--Louisiana--Baton Rouge.

Southern University Law Center--Faculty.