

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Valerie Simpson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Simpson, Valerie, 1946-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Valerie Simpson,
Dates:	November 19, 2011
Bulk Dates:	2011
Physical Description:	uncompressed MOV digital video files ().
Abstract:	Singer and songwriter Valerie Simpson (1946-) was a member of the duo Ashford & Simpson, who released their own albums and wrote hits for artists including Ray Charles, Diana Ross, Whitney Houston, Gladys Knight and the Pips, Chaka Khan, and Teddy Pendergrass. Simpson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 19, 2011, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2011_039
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Singer and songwriter Valerie Simpson was born on August 26, 1946 in the Bronx neighborhood of New York City. She attended and graduated from Morris High School and studied music at Chatham Square School.

In 1964, Simpson met and teamed up with Nickolas Ashford to record music as a duo, and they later began collaborating with solo artist Joshie Jo Armstead, a former member of the Ikettes, to write songs. Their works recorded by other artists included "Never Had It So Good" by Ronnie Milsap, "One Step at a Time" by Maxine Brown, as well as several compositions recorded by the Shirelles and Chuck Jackson. Another of their songs, "Let's Go Get Stoned," gave Ray Charles a number one U.S. R&B hit in 1966. That same year, now known as "Ashford & Simpson," the pair joined Motown Records where they wrote their best-known songs, which included "Ain't No Mountain High Enough," "You're All I Need to Get By," "Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing," and "Reach Out and Touch (Somebody's Hand)." Simpson also released two solo albums, *Exposed!* (1971) and *Valerie Simpson* (1972). In 1973, a year before Simpson and Ashford were married, they began performing, with the albums *Keep It Comin'* and *Gimme Something Real*. After *Keep It Comin'*, they left Motown and signed with Warner Bros. Their first major success was in 1977 with the gold album *Send It*, which included "Don't Cost You Nothing," a Top Ten U.S. R&B track. They subsequently released two more gold albums, *Is It Still Good to Ya?* (1978) and *Stay Free* (1978), which featured the pop Top 40 track "Found a Cure." In 1984, they released *Solid*. During this time Ashford & Simpson continued songwriting for artists like Diana Ross, Whitney Houston, and Gladys Knight and the Pips, composing hits including Chaka Khan's "I'm Every Woman" (1978) and Teddy Pendergrass's "Is It Still Good to You?" (1980). In 1996, Simpson and her husband opened Sugar Bar in New York City, a restaurant and live entertainment venue. That same year they recorded the album *Been Found* with Maya Angelou. Simpson released another solo album in 2012, *Dinosaurs Are Coming Back Again*.

In 1969, Ashford & Simpson won three Broadcast Music, Inc. Awards for the songs "Ain't No Mountain High

Enough," "Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing," and "Your Precious Love." They also were awarded the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers highest honor, the Founders Award, in 1996. In 1999, they were recipients of The Rhythm & Blues Foundation's Pioneer Award; and, in 2002, they were inducted Songwriters Hall of Fame. Simpson was also recognized by the Bronx Walk of Fame in 2003 and received an honorary doctorate degree in music from Berklee College of Music in 2014.

Simpson and Ashford were married until Ashford’s death in 2011. They have two daughters, Nicole and Asia.

Valerie Simpson was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on November 19, 2011.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Valerie Simpson was conducted by Gwen Ifill on November 19, 2011, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on uncompressed MOV digital video files. Singer and songwriter Valerie Simpson (1946-) was a member of the duo Ashford & Simpson, who released their own albums and wrote hits for artists including Ray Charles, Diana Ross, Whitney Houston, Gladys Knight and the Pips, Chaka Khan, and Teddy Pendergrass.

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:

- Simpson, Valerie, 1946-
- Ifill, Gwen (Interviewer)
- N/A (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Simpson, Valerie, 1946- --Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Singer

Songwriter

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 Valerie Simpson, November 19, 2011. 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