

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Janie Bradford

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Bradford, Janie, 1939-
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Janie Bradford,
Dates:	March 22, 2023, November 19, 2019 and November 28, 2012
Bulk Dates:	2012, 2019 and 2023
Physical Description:	13 uncompressed MOV digital video files (5:45:12).
Abstract:	Songwriter Janie Bradford (1939 -) was a songwriter at Motown Records for twenty-eight years, writing songs such as “Money (That's What I Want),” “Tie a String Around Your Finger,” and “Too Busy Thinking About My Baby.” Bradford was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on March 22, 2023, November 19, 2019 and November 28, 2012, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2012_252
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Songwriter Janie Bradford was born on June 2, 1939 in Charleston, Missouri to Richard Henry and Elizabeth Bradford. Bradford attended Birds Mill Elementary School and Lincoln High School. Upon graduation, Bradford attended the Detroit Institute of Technology in 1956. In Detroit, Bradford lived with her sister, Clea Ethel. Their neighbor was Jackie Wilson, who introduced Bradford to the founder of Motown Records, Berry Gordy. In 1958, Bradford joined Motown Records as a secretary, but soon became a songwriter for Motown singers. The first two songs she co-authored with Gordy were included on Jackie Wilson's album, *Lonely Teardrops*. The next collaboration that Bradford co-wrote with Gordy was the song “Money (That's What I Want),” which has been covered over two hundred times by artists such as The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Muddy Watters, The Supremes, The Flying Lizards and Boyz II Men. Bradford was later promoted to director of writer's relations at Motown Records. During her twenty-years as a songwriter with Motown Records, she wrote numerous hit songs such as Marv Johnson's “All The Love I've Got” in 1960, Stevie Wonder's “Contract on Love” in 1962, Mary Well's “Your Old Standby” in 1963, The Supremes' “Tie a String Around Your Finger” in 1963, The Temptations' “Too Busy Thinking About My Baby” in 1963, and Carolyn Crawford's “My Smile Is Just a Frown (Turned Upside Down)” in 1964. Bradford later founded Mountain Goat Music and opened Music Notes Gift Shop in Beverly Hills, California. In 2010, Bradford established Twin Records with songwriter and singer Marilyn McLeod. Together Bradford and McLeod produced Bradford the album titled, *I Believe in Me*.

Bradford is the executive director of the Janie Bradford Heroes and Legends (HAL) Scholarship Fund and producer of the HAL Awards. She has been honored by Broadcast Music, Inc. with a Certificate of Achievement for her co-authoring “Money” and “Too Busy Thinkin' About My Baby.” She received the Vivian Carter Award from Jack the Rapper in 1989, and was named one of Motown Historical Museum's Women of Motown in 2000.

Janie Bradford was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on November 28, 2012 and November 19, 2019.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Janie Bradford was conducted by Harriette Cole and Larry Crowe on March 22, 2023, November 19, 2019 and November 28, 2012, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 13 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Songwriter Janie Bradford (1939 -) was a songwriter at Motown Records for twenty-eight years, writing songs such as “Money (That's What I Want),” “Tie a String Around Your Finger,” and “Too Busy Thinking About My Baby.”

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:

Bradford, Janie, 1939-

Cole, Harriette (Interviewer)

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Bradford, Janie, 1939---Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Motown Record Corporation

Occupations:

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 Janie Bradford, March 22, 2023, November 19, 2019 and November 28, 2012. 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 Janie Bradford, Section A2012_252_001_001, TRT: 1:29:28 ?

Janie Bradford was born on June 2, 1939 in Charleston, Missouri to Elizabeth Coleman Bradford and Richard Bradford. Her maternal family originated in Arkansas, where her grandfather, Jessie Coleman, worked as a Pullman porter and music teacher, while her grandmother, Clea Coleman, raised fourteen children. The family moved to Missouri when Bradford's mother was young. Bradford's father was one year younger than her maternal grandfather. He was born on a plantation in Mississippi, and fled after a skirmish with the white owner. To avoid being found, he assumed the owner's name, Bradford, and moved to Charleston, Missouri, where he became a Baptist minister and met Bradford's mother. They had three children, of whom Bradford was the youngest. Her father preached at the Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church in a rural area outside of Charleston, which was mostly integrated until the Civil Rights Movement, when the white business owners began banning African American patrons in reprisal.

Video Oral History Interview with Janie Bradford, Section A2012_252_001_002, TRT: 2:28:58 ?

Janie Bradford and her two siblings were raised by their parents, Elizabeth Coleman Bradford and Richard Bradford, in Charleston, Missouri. They had a small horse farm near the Morning Star Baptist Church, where her father, the church's minister, often hosted guests who were in need of a place to stay. Bradford's older sister, Clea Bradford, served as the church pianist, and later became a jazz singer and recorded the song 'My Love's a Monster.' Bradford's father was strict, and Bradford mostly listened to church music. She began her education at the Bird's Mill School, where she was taught by Wilma Mountjoy from kindergarten to the eighth grade. She went on to attend Lincoln High School, where she began writing poetry under the tutelage of her English teacher, Naomi Scott. Bradford was a strong student, and often competed for the best grades with her friend, Vernell Perry. She served as the president of her class, and graduated from high school as valedictorian.

Video Oral History Interview with Janie Bradford, Section A2012_252_001_003, TRT: 3:29:01 ?

Janie Bradford graduated from Lincoln High School in Charleston, Missouri, and then enrolled at the Detroit Institute of Technology in Detroit, Michigan. Her sister, Clea Bradford, was a singer in the local music scene, and Bradford often accompanied her to nightclubs like the 20 Grand and Phelps Lounge. In 1957, Bradford's neighbor, singer Jackie Wilson, introduced to her to Berry Gordy, who was a songwriter for Wilson at the time. Bradford told Gordy that she was also a songwriter, and gave him a collection of her poetry to read. Two of her compositions were included on Wilson's album, 'Lonely Teardrops' in 1959, which was the same year that Gordy founded Motown Records. Soon after, Bradford wrote 'Money (That's What I Want),' which was recorded by Barrett Strong and released by Gordy through Anna Records. In 1960, Bradford suggested renaming The Primettes as The Supremes. She also talks about her most popular songs on Motown Records, including 'Your Old Standby' and 'All the Love I Got.'

Video Oral History Interview with Janie Bradford, Section A2012_252_001_004, TRT: 4:28:41 ?

Janie Bradford wrote a number of songs for Motown Records artists. She received payments for initial use as well as royalties from songs like 'Money (That's What I Want),' which was covered by The Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Flying Lizards. Bradford was employed by the Jobete Music Company, Inc., a Motown music publishing company, where she worked on copyrights and songwriter agreements. She remembers the camaraderie at Motown Records, and her friendships with songwriters like Marilyn McLeod and Claudette

Robinson. She worked with The Funk Brothers studio band, and collaborated with Brian Holland and Lamont Dozier of the songwriting team Holland Dozier Holland. Bradford remained at Motown Records when the company moved from Detroit, Michigan to Los Angeles, California in 1986, and created the Mountain Goat Music publishing company later that year. She later opened the Music Notes gift shop in Los Angeles, and established the Heroes and Legends Scholarship Fund with singer Mary Wilson.

Video Oral History Interview with Janie Bradford, Section A2012_252_001_005, TRT: 5:20:00 ?

Janie Bradford established the Heroes and Legends Scholarship Fund, which provided financial assistance to music professionals like percussionist Lady Sticks and electronic musician Flying Lotus. Bradford continued to write music, and worked closely with fellow Motown Records songwriter Marilyn McLeod. Bradford had two children, and helped raise her grandchildren. She describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community, and talks about her favorite musicians. Bradford also reflects upon her life, legacy and how she would like to be remembered. She concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.

Video Oral History Interview with Janie Bradford, Section A2012_252_002_006, TRT: 6:28:02 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Janie Bradford, Section A2012_252_002_007, TRT: 7:28:02 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Janie Bradford, Section A2012_252_002_008, TRT: 8:28:52 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Janie Bradford, Section A2012_252_002_009, TRT: 9:30:10 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Janie Bradford, Section A2012_252_002_010, TRT: 10:14:50 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Janie Bradford, Section A2012_252_003_011, TRT: 1:32:19 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Janie Bradford, Section A2012_252_003_012, TRT: 2:29:43 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Janie Bradford, Section A2012_252_003_013, TRT: 3:17:06 ?

Video Oral History Interview with Janie Bradford, Section
A2012_252_Bradford_Janie_06_MED_001, TRT: 2:00:00 ?

Janie Bradford

Video Oral History Interview with Janie Bradford, Section
A2012_252_Bradford_Janie_06_MED_003, TRT: 0:30:00

Janie Bradford