

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Kim Fields

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## Overview of the Collection

<b>Repository:</b>	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
<b>Creator:</b>	Fields, Kim, 1969-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Kim Fields,
<b>Dates:</b>	November 21, 2002
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2002
<b>Physical Description:</b>	8 Betacame SP videocassettes (3:49:20).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Actress Kim Fields (1969 - ) began her acting career as a child and continued to act and direct into adulthood. She is best known for her work on the television series, <i>The Facts of Life</i> , and <i>Living Single</i> . Fields was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on November 21, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2002_215
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Actress Kim Fields was born on May 12, 1969, in New York City to an acting family; her mother, Chip Fields, and Fields's sister, Alexis, were actresses. Though she began acting at age five, Fields had her first memorable role as a child actress in the classic Mrs. Butterworth syrup commercial at age seven.

Fields later played the young daughter on the short-lived series, *Baby, I'm Back*. In 1979, Fields landed the role of Dorothy "Tootie" Ramsey on the hit show, *The Facts of Life*, where she grew up in front of the television audience until the show ended in 1988. In 1980, Fields played a gymnast on the NBC movie, *Children of Divorce*.

After *The Facts of Life*, Fields attended Pepperdine University from which she graduated in 1990 with her B.A. degree in communications and film. While studying at Pepperdine, Fields started her own production company, Victory Entertainment, which specialized in television, film and theater.

In 1993, Fields returned to TV in another hit series; in her new role she played the part of Regine Hunter, opposite Queen Latifah, in the Fox sitcom, *Living Single*. In 1998, *Living Single* went off the air and Fields founded Little Mogul Holdings. In 1994, Fields received an NAACP Image Award for Best Director for bringing *Vanities* to the stage in Los Angeles; in 1995, she was again honored by the NAACP with an Image Award for Best Actress in *Fight the Good Fight*.

Fields also directed Nickelodeon's *Keenan and Kel* and *Taina*; Disney's *The Jersey*; and episodes of *Living Single*. Fields also made guest appearances on *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, *Keenan and Kel*, *Cupid* and *Strong Medicine*. Fields's starring roles include: *Martin* (1992), *The Golden Palace* (1992), *The Crew* (1995), *C. Bear and Jamal* (1996), *Music of the Heart* (1999), *An Invited Guest* (1999), and in the independent feature film, *Me and Mrs. Jones*.

Fields gave birth to her son, Sebastian Alexander Morgan, on March 4, 2007; on July 23, 2007, Fields married the

actor and father of her child, Christopher Morgan.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Kim Fields was conducted by Julieanna L. Richardson on November 21, 2002, in Chicago, Illinois, and was recorded on 8 Betacame SP videocassettes. Actress Kim Fields (1969 - ) began her acting career as a child and continued to act and direct into adulthood. She is best known for her work on the television series, The Facts of Life, and Living Single.

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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:

Fields, Kim, 1969-

Richardson, Julieanna L. (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Fields, Kim, 1969---Interviews

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Women television producers and directors--Interviews

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African American actresses--Interviews

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Women theatrical producers and directors--Interviews

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Harlem (New York, N.Y.)--Social conditions

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African Americans in the mass media industry--Interviews

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African Americans--Marriage

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Performing arts--United States--History--20th century

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Child actors--United States

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Fields, Chip

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Sesame Street (Television program)

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Children of working mothers

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Mothers--Employment--United States

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Imagination in children

---

Acting--Study and teaching

---

Acting--Vocational guidance--United States

---

Interpersonal relations

---

Friendship--Sociological aspects

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College students--United States

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Pepperdine University

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African American women--Social life and customs

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Marriage

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Divorce

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Latifah, Queen

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Motherhood

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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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## Occupations:

Actress

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

EntertainmentMakers

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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 Kim Fields, November 21, 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).

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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 Kim Fields, Section A2002\_215\_001\_001, TRT: 0:30:45 ?

Kim Fields talks of her early childhood in Harlem. She is quite descriptive with her earliest memories of her grandmother and mother. While Kim's father is only briefly mentioned, her mother, Chip Fields, is spoken of in great detail as she has proven to be a huge inspiration on Kim's life. She watched her mother act at a young age, which motivated Kim to take on the profession. At seven years old Kim moved from New York to Los Angeles with her mother in order to be closer to the entertainment industry. Upon arrival, Kim auditioned and was hired for her first acting role in a Mrs. Butterworth's syrup commercial. Kim is asked about her early beginnings with the children's program Sesame Street. In a very funny and revealing moment, Kim admits that she never appeared in the show and that her young and creative mind made up the story during her first interview with 'TV Guide.'

Women television producers and directors--Interviews.

African American actresses--Interviews.

Women theatrical producers and directors--Interviews.

Harlem (New York, N.Y.)--Social conditions.

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Child actors--United States.

Fields, Chip.

Sesame Street (Television program).

Children of working mothers.

Mothers--Employment--United States.

Imagination in children.

Acting--Study and teaching.

Acting--Vocational guidance--United States.

Interpersonal relations.

Friendship--Sociological aspects.

College students--United States.

Pepperdine University.

African American women--Social life and customs.

Marriage.

Divorce.

Latifah, Queen.

Motherhood.

Video Oral History Interview with Kim Fields, Section A2002\_215\_001\_002, TRT: 0:31:10 ?

Kim Fields stresses the strong belief that her mother did an amazing job raising her even though she was quite young and busy with her own acting career. The differences between New York and Los Angeles were staggering to Kim. When asked if she remembers seeing herself on television for the first time she admits that she doesn't, but that she does remember the excitement her mother had on the phone when being informed of her early roles. Although Fields loved acting, she reveals that she missed being in school; until her junior year when she was allowed to attend high school before going to the set of 'The Facts of Life.' In high school Fields was involved with many activities and enjoyed the feeling of being out of the spotlight. Fields then discusses her experience in the short-lived program 'Baby, I'm Back.' She talks of some bad acting habits she had at this

point, but explains that she was still thought of as an incredibly talented actress, even though she was not taking acting classes. In certain situations Fields's mother coached her and passed along acting knowledge. As Fields's became more experienced and successful she also became more aware of the business aspects of entertainment. Although Kim's success surpassed her mother's, it never became an issue in their strong relationship.

Video Oral History Interview with Kim Fields, Section A2002\_215\_001\_003, TRT: 0:30:32 ?

At age eight Kim Fields worked on her first television series 'Baby, I'm Back' which taught her the day-to-day responsibilities and rules that child actors need to learn when working on a series. After only one season, 'Baby, I'm Back' was cancelled and Fields set out for other roles. She soon won a role on 'The Facts of Life' despite producers' reservations about her height. For the first season she wore roller skates to add some extra inches. Fields's role as 'Tootie' on 'The Facts of Life' propelled her into superstardom and she talks in detail about her life in the public eye. Fields speaks positively about the cast of 'The Facts of Life' and describes the feeling of family that they shared together. She also discusses the importance of child actors' parental figures. When asked about her connection to the African American community, Fields is quick to share many examples from her past on her race awareness as a child to current support for African American politicians.

Video Oral History Interview with Kim Fields, Section A2002\_215\_001\_004, TRT: 0:30:30 ?

Kim Fields explains that her formative years were spent with the cast of 'The Facts of Life.' She values these relationships and remembers looking up to cast member Nancy McKeon. However, Fields's friends came from a variety of places including school and church, stressing the importance of making friends outside of the entertainment industry. The conversation moves to specifics about 'The Facts of Life' episodes and Fields lists off some of her favorites. As a contrast she also talks of a script that she refused to work from based on her set of values. In the show's eighth season Fields started to have some doubts when more characters are added to the cast. She talks of how she started to think of acting outside of 'The Facts of Life.' As was mentioned earlier in the interview, 'The Facts of Life' was a spin-off of 'Diff'rent Strokes.' Fields speaks of her relationship with the child stars of that show. Fields finishes this segment by sharing her experiences in college, emphasizing the value of having an education.

Video Oral History Interview with Kim Fields, Section A2002\_215\_001\_005, TRT: 0:29:37 ?

After 'The Facts of Life,' Kim Fields became a full-time student at Pepperdine University, enjoying her time away from the spotlight. At Pepperdine she got involved with the school's television station and hosted her own talk show. Fields did some theater during this time and also began learning more about the business side of the entertainment industry. Fields parallels her career to that of a professional sports team and makes the point that in order to stay fresh she needed to move herself around, and entertain different ideas, as well as hire a different manager. Even though Fields enjoys being out of the public eye at this time she also realizes that being in this sort of transition period can become dangerous. She stays positive though knowing that her time to reenter the spotlight will eventually come. In 1993 'Living Single' airs and quickly finds a solid audience. Fields speaks of show's chemistry of cast, writers and producers. Queen Latifah's involvement to the show is touched upon as well as the first season's success.

Video Oral History Interview with Kim Fields, Section A2002\_215\_001\_006, TRT: 0:30:00 ?

Kim Fields speaks of some of her favorite episodes and memories from 'Living

Single.' In a similar fashion to her feelings on her favorite 'Facts of Life' episodes, she says that episodes that dealt with issues that were able to help viewers were most important. Fields believes that 'Living Single' was true to life and able to teach all races about African American sisterhood by bringing their relationships to television. After discussing the positive aspects of being on 'Living Single' she admits to becoming detached from the show based on creative differences. At this point her marriage also went through major problems. Fields leaves 'Living Single' and divorces in 1998. Although Regine, the character Fields played on 'Living Single' differs in many ways from Fields's true personality, she enjoyed the role and was inspired to take on challenging roles in the future. Fields comments on individual cast members Kim Cole, Queen Latifah, Erika Alexander, T.C. Parson, and John Hinton. She then goes into detail on her relationship with Johnathan Franklin Freeman.

Video Oral History Interview with Kim Fields, Section A2002\_215\_001\_007, TRT: 0:30:16 ?

When asked of her current professional situation Kim Fields says that she is in a transition period. Although she is busy directing and producing she would like to get back into television acting. Personally, she feels like she is in a proper spiritual place and talks of her hopes to get married and have children. The challenge of maintaining a marriage and a family interests Fields. She then talks in detail about the drive one must have to make it in the entertainment industry and gives examples based on successful African American entertainers. Oddly enough, Fields is inspired more by athletes than by entertainers. Fields feels that different networks have been successful with airing African American programs and makes a point that American culture is more accepting today than it was in the past. When asked of her legacy Fields explains that she would rather be remembered for a body of work, not just a specific role. Briefly, Kim discusses her mothers career.

Video Oral History Interview with Kim Fields, Section A2002\_215\_001\_008, TRT: 0:16:30 ?

Fields wants to make sure that youth interested in working in the entertainment industry are aspiring for the right reasons. She makes a point that one cannot be successful in the industry if one is only in it for fame and fortune. Fields talks of giving back to the community where she grew up in Harlem, New York, and tells of a plan to build an amphitheater in a park where she spent time as a child. Fields is then reminded of her childhood and explains how that little girl is still, in a way, inside her even though she has changed in so many ways. Fields speaks of future roles she'd like to tackle and keeps her mind open to try new character types. She would like to be remembered for her body of work, not just a specific role. Kim Fields then speaks briefly about Sally Field's career and how she'd like to mirror it and be cast in more motion pictures.