

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Isisara Bey

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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>	Bey, Isisara, 1953-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Isisara Bey,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 29, 2016
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2016
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7 uncompressed MOV digital video files (3:23:44).
<b>Abstract:</b>	Corporate entertainment executive and event producer Isisara Bey (1953 - ) worked as the director of corporate affairs of Sony Pictures Entertainment and the V.P. of corporate affairs at Sony Music Entertainment. She also founded the business consulting agency Journey Agent Productions. Bey was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 29, 2016, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2016_013
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Corporate entertainment executive and event producer Isisara Bey was born on July 18, 1953 in Brooklyn, New York to Shirley and Eustace Jones of Guyana. She graduated from the Academy of St. Joseph in Brentwood, New York with honors in 1970. Bey earned her B.A. degree in theater in 1976 and her M.A. degree in media communications in 1980, both from Antioch University.

Bey's career began as an on-air personality for WEAA.FM at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland. She then worked as an award-winning news writer and producer for WJZ-TV. In 1988, Bey began working at Sony Pictures Entertainment in Los Angeles, California as a management associate. She was promoted to director of corporate affairs in 1992, later becoming the senior director. She then transferred to Sony Music Entertainment in New York City as vice president, corporate affairs. She retired from the position in 2007, and became the vice president of programs for the non-profit organization, Count Me in For Women's Economic Independence. She also founded her own consulting company, Journey Agent Productions, serving as a keynote speaker, live events producer and workshop facilitator. Her U.S. and international clients included the Institute for Veterans and Military Families, the Apollo Theater, New York Public Radio, American Society of Transplantation, New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Odyssey Media Business Women's Retreat, Association of Southeast Asian Nations Women of the World (WOW) Festival, Vital Voices and Pathways to Prosperity. She served as the artistic director of the March on Washington Film Festival in Washington, D.C. since 2014.

Bey served on the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation board, and organized the first Congressional Tri-Caucus retreats of Black, Hispanic, and Asian & Pacific Islander members of Congress. Bey also served on the boards of the National Book Foundation, Tony Bennett's Exploring the Arts Foundation, Rhythm & Blues Foundation and the e-Women Network Advisory Council.

As a news producer for WJZ-TV, Bey received the National Unity Award for reporting on social issues and Maryland's Associated Press award for best investigative/documentary. She was also awarded the Outstanding Radio, Producer, Short Form award from Associated Press.

Bey has one daughter named Makara Bey.

Isisara Bey was interviewed by *The HistoryMakers* on August 29, 2016.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Isisara Bey was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 29, 2016, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 7 uncompressed MOV digital video files. Corporate entertainment executive and event producer Isisara Bey (1953 - ) worked as the director of corporate affairs of Sony Pictures Entertainment and the V.P. of corporate affairs at Sony Music Entertainment. She also founded the business consulting agency Journey Agent Productions.

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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:

Bey, Isisara, 1953-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Hickey, Matthew (Videographer)

### Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews  
Bey, Isisara, 1953- --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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## Occupations:

Entertainment Executive

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## HistoryMakers® Category:

MusicMakers

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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 Isisara Bey, August 29, 2016. 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 Isisara Bey, Section A2016\_013\_001\_001, TRT: 1:27:15 ?

Isisara Bey was born on July 18, 1953 in Brooklyn, New York to Shirley Jones and Eustace Jones. Her paternal great-grandfather, Walter McAlpin Jones, was the son of a Scottish overseer in Barbados. He married a Barbadian slave, with whom he raised a family in Guyana. There, Bey's father was trained as a blacksmith, and found work as a merchant seaman. His ship was torpedoed during World War II, and he was rescued and brought to Newport News, Virginia. Bey's maternal grandmother, Annie Hamer, worked as a teacher in Georgetown, Guyana. She was not married to Bey's maternal grandfather, so Bey's mother was raised by relatives in Buxton, Guyana. Her mother went on to attend Queen's College in Guyana, and later became a teacher. Bey's parents met and married in Guyana, and later relocated to New York City. Bey was their only child, and grew up in a close knit Guyanese community in Brooklyn. When she was eight years old, she moved with her family to the Hollis section of Queens, New York.

Video Oral History Interview with Isisara Bey, Section A2016\_013\_001\_002, TRT: 2:28:13 ?

Isisara Bey began her education at the St. Peter Claver School in Queens, New York, where her mother was one of the founding faculty members. Bey developed an interest in radio broadcasting at an early age, when she met radio host Basil Hinds in Guyana. She went on to attend the St. Pascal Baylon School in Queens. Upon entering the eighth grade, Bey was sent to attend boarding school at the Academy of St. Joseph in Brentwood, New York, where she was one of five African American students. There, she served as president of the resident council and the Catholic Interracial Council. Bey was also influenced by her religion teacher, who introduced her to Eastern traditions. During her sophomore year, Bey was accused of corrupting her white classmates after loaning Claude Brown's book, 'Manchild in the Promised Land,' to a friend. She graduated in 1970, and received a scholarship to attend the University of Connecticut in Storrs.

Video Oral History Interview with Isisara Bey, Section A2016\_013\_001\_003, TRT: 3:30:36 ?

Isisara Bey enrolled in 1970 at the University of Connecticut in Storrs. She left the school during her sophomore year, when her mother passed away. At that time, Bey moved to Washington, D.C., and worked at a McDonald's restaurant to save money for a plane ticket to Guyana. During a late night shift, Bey met a student who convinced her to enroll at Antioch College in Columbia, Maryland. She studied early education for one year, and then transferred to the campus in Baltimore, Maryland. There, Bey joined the experimental Theatre Project, and developed a theater therapy workshop for inmates at the Baltimore City Jail. She also joined the Moorish Science Temple of America. With her fellow temple members, Bey petitioned to have her race changed to white on her driver's license. They withheld their taxes and placed the money in escrow, and were sued by the Internal Revenue Service in the Circuit Court for Baltimore County. At this point, Bey talks about the history of the reparations movement.

Video Oral History Interview with Isisara Bey, Section A2016\_013\_001\_004, TRT: 4:30:52 ?

Isisara Bey earned a master's degree from Antioch College while living in Baltimore, Maryland. In 1979, Bey was hired by Kweisi Mfume at Baltimore's WEAA Radio. She hosted a morning talk show, which included a guided meditation segment and interviews with bands like Earth, Wind and Fire. During this time, Bey also taught broadcasting courses at Morgan State College. In 1984, she secured an internship at Baltimore's WJZ-TV, and was then hired as a production assistant. She was eventually promoted to news producer, and received an award for her coverage of homelessness. In 1988, Bey was hired as a

management trainee at Columbia Pictures, where her peers included movie producer Debra Martin Chase. Bey completed her training in Culver City, California, and was placed in Columbia Pictures' corporate affairs division. She was mentored by black executive Harvey J. Lehman, Jr., and worked on movies like 'Glory.' Bey also remembers her husband, who was murdered in 1987.

Video Oral History Interview with Isisara Bey, Section A2016\_013\_001\_005, TRT: 5:26:21 ?

Isisara Bey worked in corporate affairs at Columbia Pictures. While there, she created a symposium series to foster diversity awareness within the company. In 1994, she was recruited by black executive H. LeBaron Taylor to join the corporate affairs division at Sony Music Entertainment. There, Bey continued hosting the symposium, which featured speakers like actor Danny Glover. She also created an exhibition of portraits from the Columbia Records archives. In 2000, Bey became the head of corporate affairs at Sony Music Entertainment. In that role, she partnered with organizations like the NAACP and the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. She hosted a retreat for the three minority congressional caucuses, which was instrumental in the founding of the Congressional Tri-Caucus. Bey also created the Sony Music Diversity Council and a number of minority affinity groups. At this point, Bey reflects upon the legacy of H. LeBaron Taylor, and describes her decision to adopt her daughter.

Video Oral History Interview with Isisara Bey, Section A2016\_013\_001\_006, TRT: 6:32:24 ?

Isisara Bey traveled to Cambodia in the late 1990s to adopt her daughter, Makara Bey. She was born to a Cambodian mother and a Ghanaian UN soldier, and was rejected by her biological family because of her African heritage. During this time, Bey supervised the Sony Music Diversity Council at Sony Music Entertainment. After retiring in 2007, she became the vice president of programs for Count Me In for Women's Economic Independence, a fund for women who owned small businesses. There, she oversaw the Make Mine a Million Dollar Business competition. In 2012, Bey gave a TEDx talk on women's leadership at Barnard College in New York City. In 2013, she founded Journey Agent Productions, through which she offered speaking engagements, group workshops and coaching sessions to clients like the Tupperware Brands Corporation. Bey also served as the executive producer of the March on Washington Film Festival, which featured such films as 'Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise,' and speakers like activist Bernice Johnson Reagon.

Video Oral History Interview with Isisara Bey, Section A2016\_013\_001\_007, TRT: 7:28:03 ?

Isisara Bey's company, Journey Agent Productions, collaborated with the Apollo Theater Foundation to host the Women of the World Festival in New York City. Bey produced the festival's panels and workshops, which centered on the arts, social justice and women's issues. At this point in the interview, Bey talks about her career, and describes her plans for the future. She also reflects upon her legacy and family, and her hopes and concerns for the African American community. Bey describes how she would like to be remembered, and concludes the interview by narrating her photographs.