

# Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Vernon Jones

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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>	Jones, Vernon, 1960-
<b>Title:</b>	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Vernon Jones,
<b>Dates:</b>	August 14, 2003
<b>Bulk Dates:</b>	2003
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:18:18).
<b>Abstract:</b>	County government administrator Vernon Jones (1960 - ) is the youngest CEO of DeKalb County, Georgia. Jones was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on August 14, 2003, in Decatur, Georgia. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
<b>Identification:</b>	A2003_189
<b>Language:</b>	The interview and records are in English.

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## Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Vernon Jones was born on October 31, 1960, in Laurel Hill, North Carolina. From there he went on to attend North Carolina Central University in Durham, earning a B.A. in business administration in 1983. Jones would later graduate from Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government's Executive Program.

Jones began his career working in the telecommunications industry, first with WorldCom and later with BellSouth Corporation, where he was part of a team that established wireless communications in Montevideo, Uruguay. Always interested in public policy issues, Jones sought election to the Georgia House of Representatives where he served for eight years, from 1992 to 2000.

After leaving the Georgia House of Representatives, Jones remained active in politics. Currently he serves as the CEO of DeKalb County, Georgia, a position in which he oversees the Board of Commissioners of the county. He is also responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of a 7,000-employee civic workforce and a \$2.6 billion budget within the state's second most populous county. He has the honor of being the youngest person to hold this position. Since being elected, Jones has been active in purchasing land for the county to be used as parks, as well as a landmark initiative requiring all senior county employees to disclose financial information to prevent any conflicts of interest. Jones is currently working to significantly boost economic growth within DeKalb County.

Outside of the office, Jones is active in a number of community and civic organizations, including the Advocates for Seniors; New Birth Missionary Baptist Church in Decatur, Georgia; Youth Prevention Services; and the National Black M.B.A. Association. He is also a founding member of the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Stone Mountain Alumni Chapter.

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## Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Vernon Jones was conducted by Larry Crowe on August 14, 2003, in Decatur, Georgia, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. County government administrator Vernon Jones (1960 - ) is the youngest CEO of DeKalb County, Georgia.

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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:

Jones, Vernon, 1960-

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Versfelt, Porter (Videographer)

## Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Jones, Vernon, 1960---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:

State Government Administrator

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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 Vernon Jones, August 14, 2003. 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 Vernon Jones, Section A2003\_189\_001\_001, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

Vernon Jones was born on October 31, 1960 in Laurel Hill, North Carolina. Jones' mother, Ruth Hicks Jones, grew up in Marlboro County, South Carolina. Many of her family members migrated North, primarily to New York City, to escape segregation and discrimination in the American South. Jones' father, Robert Lee Jones, is named after General Robert E. Lee and served in the Third Army under General Patton during WWII. He sustained a serious spine injury and was placed on disability upon returning to the United States. He would later mentor young soldiers including one of his sons who served in Vietnam. Jones' paternal grandfather was a member of the Lumbee tribe from southeastern North Carolina. Jones' parents met in South Carolina and moved to North Carolina where his father worked in a factory and his mother worked on the family farm.

Jones describes the sights, sounds and smells of growing up on a farm and the level of educational attainment in his family. His earliest memory is his brother's birth in 1963.

Video Oral History Interview with Vernon Jones, Section A2003\_189\_001\_002, TRT: 0:28:00 ?

Vernon Jones was raised on a small family farm in Laurel Hill, North Carolina. Southern hospitality, close relationships with neighbors and strong ties to the church characterized the community's culture. His family attended Livingston Chapel Missionary Baptist Church. Jones was an active child that got in trouble frequently. He attended Pate Gardner Elementary School in Gibson, North Carolina. His first grade teacher created a student council and chose Jones as president; Jones enjoyed school that year. Despite being academically inclined, in second grade Jones developed a dislike for school that carried into his years at Scotland High School, a large integrated county school. Responsibilities of the family farm prohibited Jones from participating in high school extracurricular activities. Jones was exposed to black singers such as Marvin Gaye and The Supremes through television. Jones describes his parents' personalities and how the Civil Rights Movement impacted their lives.

Video Oral History Interview with Vernon Jones, Section A2003\_189\_001\_003, TRT: 0:28:42 ?

Vernon Jones talks about television programming in the 1970s and driving a school bus while attending Scotland High School in Laurinburg, North Carolina. Jones became interested in college after visiting his sister at North Carolina Central University in Durham; he enrolled at NCCU in 1979. There, he developed a political consciousness, heard HistoryMaker Benjamin Hooks speak, pledged Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity and met HistoryMaker Julian Bond in the aftermath of the 1979 Greensboro Massacre. Jones talks about faculty and staff at NCCU. After graduating in 1983 with a B.A. in business administration, he worked on an assembly line at Research Triangle Park. Jones soon quit and accepted an internship with IBM in New York. Then, he began working for Coca-Cola as a trade examiner for the company's Vermont distribution sites. Jones began his career in the telecommunications industry at MCI in Atlanta, Georgia. He then worked for GTE and BellSouth. In 1992, Jones was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives.

Video Oral History Interview with Vernon Jones, Section A2003\_189\_001\_004, TRT: 0:28:30 ?

Vernon Jones ran unsuccessfully for the Georgia House of Representatives in 1990. Two years later, after district reapportionment, Jones won the open seat for District 71 in the Atlanta metropolitan area. Jones identifies himself as a solution-oriented centrist. During the 1990s, the Georgia House of Representatives debated issues such as crime prevention, children's health care coverage, and education. Jones comments on politics in 21st century America, specifically politicians' tendency to propose solutions, such as longer prison sentences, based on public opinion and political expediency; celebrity politicians such as Arnold Schwarzenegger; the influence of the domestic economy and the media on public policy; and, the paradox of campaigning as an "honest politician." Jones also talks about demographic changes in the DeKalb County and the Atlanta metropolitan area since the 1970s.

Video Oral History Interview with Vernon Jones, Section A2003\_189\_001\_005, TRT: 0:24:36 ?

Vernon Jones was elected chief executive officer of DeKalb County, Georgia in 2000. He explains how the position allows him to have a more direct impact on his constituents unlike the state-oriented Georgia House of Representatives. Jones tailored county fiscal policy to account for revenue deficits resulting from the recession of the early 2000s. He also drew from his IT and management backgrounds when streamlining county departments, updating county financial

systems, and mandating customer service training for all county employees. Jones hopes to implement a recycling program and address public transportation issues before the completion of his first term in 2004. He describes his approach to county governance, specifically his views on affirmative action programs. Jones considers the preservation of public land part of his legacy as DeKalb County chief executive officer. He concludes by describing how he would like to be remembered and narrating his photographs.